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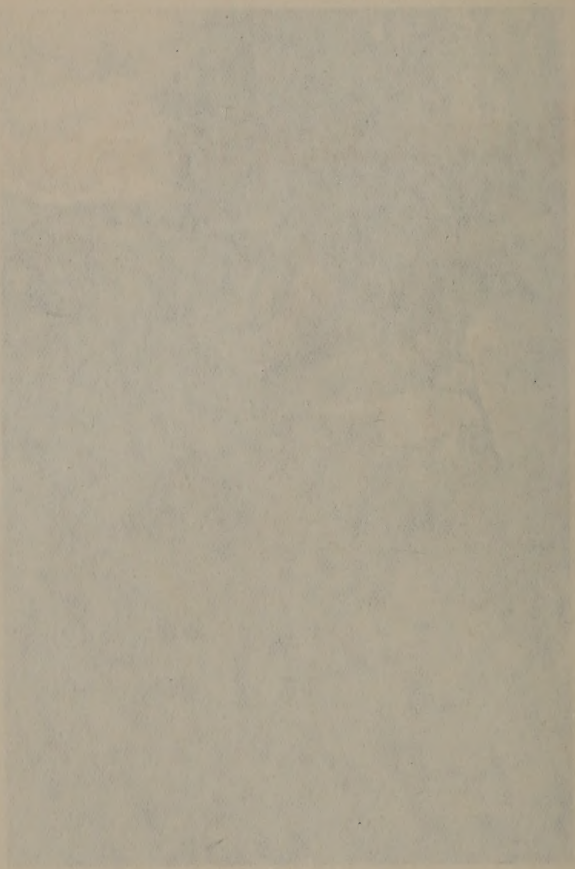

NOVELS AND STORIES

BY

Harriet Beecher Stowe

OLDTOWN FOLKS II, AND SAM LAWSON'S OLDTOWN FIRESIDE STORIES

Fireside Edition

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OLDTOWN FOLKS

CHAPTER XXX

WE BEGIN TO BE GROWN-UP PEOPLE

We begin to be grown-up people. We cannot always remain in the pleasant valley of childhood. I myself, good reader, have dwelt on its scenes longer, because, looking back on it from the extreme end of life, it seems to my weary eyes so fresh and beautiful; the dew of the morning-land lies on it, that dew which no coming day will restore.

Our childhood, as the reader has seen, must be confessed to have been reasonably enjoyable. Its influences were all homely, innocent, and pure. There was no seductive vice, no open or covert immorality. Our worst form of roaring dissipation consisted in being too fond of huckleberry parties, or in the immoderate pursuit of chestnuts and walnuts. Even the vagrant associates of uncertain social standing who abounded in Oldtown were characterized by a kind of woodland innocence, and were not much more harmful than woodchucks and squirrels.

Sam Lawson, for instance, though he dearly loved lazy lounging, and was devoted to idle tramps, was yet a most edifying vagrant. A profane word was an abomination in his sight; his speculations on doctrines were all orthodox, and his expositions of Scripture as original and abundant as those of some of the dreamy old fathers. As a general thing he was a devout Sunday keeper and a pillar of the

sanctuary, playing his bass-viol to the most mournful tunes with evident relish.

I remember being once left at home alone on Sunday, with an incipient sore-throat, when Sam volunteered himself as my nurse. In the course of the forenoon stillness, a wandering Indian came in, who, by the joint influence of a large mug of cider and the weariness of his tramp, fell into a heavy sleep on our kitchen floor, and somehow Sam was beguiled to amuse himself by tickling his nose with a broom-straw, and laughing, until the tears rolled down his cheeks, at the sleepy snorts and struggles and odd contortions of visage which were the results. Yet so tender was Sam's conscience, that he had frequent searchings of heart, afterward, on account of this profanation of sacred hours, and indulged in floods of long-winded penitence.

Though Sam abhorred all profanity, yet for seasons of extreme provocation he was well provided with that gentler Yankee litany which affords to the irritated mind the comfort of swearing without the commission of the sin. Under great pressure of provocation Sam Lawson freely said, "Darn it!" The word "darn," in fact, was to the conscientious New England mind a comfortable resting-place, a refreshment to the exacerbated spirit, that shrunk from that too similar word with an *m* in it.

In my boyhood I sometimes pondered that other hard word, and vaguely decided to speak it, with that awful curiosity which gives to an unknown sin a hold upon the imagination. What would happen if I should say "damn"? I dwelt on that subject with a restless curiosity which my grandmother certainly would have told me was a temptation of the Devil. The horrible desire so grew on me, that once, in the sanctity of my own private apartment, with all the doors shut and locked, I thought I would boldly try the experiment of saying "damn" out loud, and seeing what would happen. I did it, and looked up apprehensively to

see if the walls were going to fall on me, but they did n't, and I covered up my head in the bedclothes and felt degraded. I had committed the sin, and got not even the excitement of a catastrophe. The Lord apparently did not think me worth his notice.

In regard to the awful questions of my grandmother's blue book, our triad grew up with varying influences. Harry, as I have said, was one of those quiet human beings, of great force in native individuality, who silently draw from all scenes and things just those elements which their own being craves, and resolutely and calmly think their own thoughts, and live their own life, amid the most discordant influences; just as the fluid, sparkling waters of a mountain brook dart this way and that amid stones and rubbish, and hum to themselves their own quiet, hidden tune.

A saintly woman, whose heart was burning itself away in the torturing fires of a slow martyrdom, had been for the first ten years of his life his only companion and teacher, and, dying, had sealed him with a seal given from a visibly opened heaven; and thenceforward no theologies, and no human authority, had the power and weight with him that had the remembrance of those dying eyes, and the sanctity of those last counsels.

By native descent Harry was a gentleman of the peculiarly English stock. He had the shy reserve, the silent, self-respecting pride and delicacy, which led him to keep his own soul as a castle, and that interested, because it left a sense of something veiled and unexpressed.

We were now eighteen years old, and yet, during all these years that he had lived side by side with me in closest intimacy, he had never spoken to me freely and frankly of that which I afterwards learned was always the intensest and bitterest mortification of his life, namely, his father's desertion of his mother and himself. Once only do I remember ever to have seen him carried away by anger, and

that was when a coarse and cruel bully among the schoolboys applied to him a name which reflected on his mother's honor. The anger of such quiet people is often a perfect convulsion, and it was so in this case. He seemed to blaze with it, — to flame up and redden with a delirious passion; and he knocked down and stamped upon the boy with a blind fury which it was really frightful to see, and which was in singular contrast with his usual unprovokable good-humor.

Ellery Davenport had made good his promise of looking for the pocket-book which Harry's father had left in his country-seat, and the marriage certificate of his mother had been found in it, and carefully lodged in the hands of Lady Lothrop; but nothing had been said to us children about it; it was merely held quietly, as a document that might be of use in time in bringing some property to the children. And even at the time of this fight with the schoolboy, Harry said so little afterward, that the real depth of his feeling on this subject was not suspected.

I have reason to believe, also, that Ellery Davenport did succeed in making the father of Harry and Tina aware of the existence of two such promising children, and of the respectability of the families into which they had been adopted. Captain Percival, now Sir Harry Percival, had married again in England, so Ellery Davenport had informed Miss Mehitable in a letter, and had a son by this marriage, and so had no desire to bring to view his former connection. It was understood, I believe, that a sum of money was to be transmitted yearly to the hands of the guardians of the children, for their benefit, and that they were to be left undisturbed in the possession of those who had adopted them.

Miss Mehitable had suffered so extremely herself by the conflict of her own earnest, melancholy nature with the theologic ideas of her time, that she shrunk with dread

from imposing them on the gay and joyous little being whose education she had undertaken. Yet she was impressed by that awful sense of responsibility which is one of the most imperative characteristics of the New England mind; and she applied to her brother earnestly to know what she should teach Tina with regard to her own spiritual position. The reply of her brother was characteristic, and we shall give it here: —

My dear Sister, — I am a Puritan, — the son, the grandson, the great-grandson of Puritans, — and I say to you, Plant the footsteps of your child on the ground of the old Cambridge Platform, and teach her as Winthrop and Dudley and the Mathers taught their children, — that she "is already a member in the Church of Christ, — that she is in covenant with God, and hath the seal thereof upon her, to wit, baptism; and so, if not regenerate, is yet in a more hopeful way of attaining regeneration and all spiritual blessings, both of the covenant and seal." [1] By teaching the child this, you will place her mind in natural and healthful relations with God and religion. She will feel in her Father's house, and under her Father's care, and the long and weary years of a sense of disinheritance with which you struggled will be spared to her.

I hold Jonathan Edwards to have been the greatest man, since St. Augustine, that Christianity has turned out. But when a great man, instead of making himself a great ladder for feeble folks to climb on, strikes away the ladder and bids them come to where he stands at a step, his greatness and his goodness both may prove unfortunate for those who come after him. I go for the good old Puritan platform.

Your affectionate brother,

Jonathan Rossiter.

[1] Cambridge Platform. Mather's *Magnalia*, page 227, article 7.

The consequence of all this was, that Tina adopted in her glad and joyous nature the simple, helpful faith of her brother, — the faith in an ever good, ever present, ever kind Father, — whose child she was and in whose household she had grown up. She had a most unbounded faith in prayer, and in the indulgence and tenderness of the Heavenly Power. All things to her eyes were seen through the halo of a cheerful, sanguine, confiding nature. Life had for her no cloud or darkness or mystery.

As to myself, I had been taught in the contrary doctrines, — that I was a disinherited child of wrath. It is true that this doctrine was contradicted by the whole influence of the minister, who, as I have said before, belonged to the Arminian wing of the Church, and bore very mildly on all these great topics. My grandmother sometimes endeavored to stir him up to more decisive orthodoxy, and especially to a more vigorous presentation of the doctrine of native human depravity. I remember once, in her zeal, her quoting to him as a proof-text the quatrain of Dr. Watts: —

> "Conceived in sin, O woful state!
> Before we draw our breath,
> The first young pulse begins to beat
> Iniquity and death."

"That, madam," said Dr. Lothrop, who never forgot to be the grand gentleman under any circumstances,— "that, madam, is not the New Testament, but Dr. Isaac Watts, allow me to remind you."

"Well," said my grandmother, "Dr. Watts got it from the Bible."

"Yes, madam, a very long way from the Bible, allow me to say."

And yet, after all, though I did not like my grandmother's Calvinistic doctrines, I must confess that she, and all such as thought like her, always impressed me as being more earnestly religious than those that held the milder and more moderate belief.

Once in a while old Dr. Stern would preach in our neighborhood, and I used to go to hear him. Everybody went to hear him. A sermon on reprobation from Dr. Stern would stir up a whole community in those days, just as a presidential election stirs one up now. And I remember that he used to impress me as being more like a messenger from the other world than most ministers. Dr. Lothrop's sermons, by the side of his, were like Pope's Pastorals beside the Tragedies of Æschylus. Dr. Lothrop's discourses were smooth, they were sensible, they were well worded, and everybody went to sleep under them; but Dr. Stern shook and swayed his audience like a field of grain under a high wind. There was no possibility of not listening to him, or of hearing him with indifference, for he dealt in assertions that would have made the very dead turn in their graves. One of his sermons was talked of for months afterward, with a sort of suppressed breath of supernatural awe, such as men would use in discussing the reappearance of a soul from the other world.

But meanwhile I believed neither my grandmother, nor Dr. Stern, nor the minister. The eternal questions seethed and boiled and burned in my mind without answer. It was not my own personal destiny that lay with weight on my mind; it was the incessant, restless desire to know the real truth from some unanswerable authority. I longed for a visible, tangible communion with God; I longed to see the eternal beauty, to hear a friendly voice from the eternal silence. Among all the differences with regard to doctrinal opinion, I could see clearly that there were two classes of people in the world, — those who had found God and felt him as a living power upon their spirits, and those who had not; and that unknown experience was what I sought.

Such, then, were we three children when Harry and I were in our eighteenth year and Tina in her fifteenth. And just at this moment there was among the high con-

sulting powers that regulated our destiny a movement as to what further was to be done with the three that had hitherto grown up together.

Now, if the reader has attentively read ancient and modern history, he will observe that there is a class of women to be found in this lower world, who, wherever they are, are sure to be in some way the first or the last cause of everything that is going on. Everybody knows, for instance, that Helen was the great instigator of the Trojan war, and if it had not been for her we should have had no Homer. In France, Madame Récamier was, for the time being, reason enough for almost anything that any man in France did; and yet one cannot find out that Madame Récamier had any uncommon genius of her own, except the sovereign one of charming every human being that came in her way, so that all became her humble and subservient subjects. The instance is a marked one, because it operated in a wide sphere, on very celebrated men, in an interesting historic period. But it individualizes a kind of faculty which, generally speaking, is peculiar to women, though it is in some instances exercised by men, — a faculty of charming and controlling every person with whom one has to do.

Tina was now verging toward maturity; she was in just that delicious period in which the girl has all the privileges and graces of childhood, its freedom of movement and action, brightened with a sort of mysterious aurora by the coming dawn of womanhood; and everything indicated that she was to be one of this powerful class of womankind. Can one analyze the charm which such women possess? I have a theory that, in all cases, there is a certain amount of genius with it, — genius which does not declare itself in literature, but in social life, and which devotes itself to pleasing, as other artists devote themselves to painting or to poetry.

Tina had no inconsiderable share of self-will; she was

very pronounced in her tastes, and fond of her own way; but she had received from nature this passion for entertaining, and been endowed with varied talents in this line which made her always, from early childhood, the coveted and desired person in every circle. Not a visage in Oldtown was so set in grimness of care, that it did not relax its lines when it saw Tina coming down the street; for Tina could mimic and sing and dance, and fling back joke for joke in a perfect meteoric shower. So long as she entertained, she was perfectly indifferent who the party was. She would display her accomplishments to a set of strolling Indians, or for Sam Lawson and Jake Marshall, as readily as for any one else. She would run up and catch the minister by the elbow as he solemnly and decorously moved down street, and his face always broke into a laugh at the sight of her.

The minister's lady, and Aunt Lois, and Miss Deborah Kittery, while they used to mourn in secret places over her want of decorum in thus displaying her talents before the lower classes, would afterward laugh till the tears rolled down their cheeks and their ancient whalebone stays creaked, when she would do the same thing over in a select circle for them.

We have seen how completely she had conquered Polly, and what difficulty Miss Mehitable found in applying the precepts of Mrs. Chapone and Miss Hannah More to her case. The pattern young lady of the period, in the eyes of all respectable females, was expressed by Lucilla Stanley, in "Cœlebs in Search of a Wife." But when Miss Mehitable, after delighting herself with the Johnsonian balance of the rhythmical sentences which described this paragon as "not so much perfectly beautiful as perfectly elegant," — this model of consistency, who always blushed at the right moment, spoke at the right moment, and stopped at the right moment, and was, in short, a woman made to order, precisely to suit a bachelor who had traversed the whole

earth, "not expecting perfection, but looking for consistency," — when, after all these charming visions, she looked at Tina, she was perfectly dismayed at contemplating her scholar. She felt the power by which Tina continually charmed and beguiled her, and the empire which she exercised over her; and, with wonderful good sense, she formally laid down the weapons of authority when she found she had no heart to use them.

"My child," she said to her one day, when that young lady was about eleven years of age, "you are a great deal stronger than I. I am weak because I love you, and because I have been broken by sorrow, and because, being a poor old woman, I don't trust myself. And you are young and strong and fearless; but remember, dear, the life you have to live is yours and not mine. I have not the heart to force you to take my way instead of your own, but I shall warn you that it will be better you should do so, and then leave you free. If you don't take my way, I shall do the very best for you that I can in your way, and you must take the responsibility in the end."

This was the only kind of system which Miss Mehitable was capable of carrying out. She was wise, shrewd, and loving, and she gradually controlled her little charge more and more by simple influence, but she had to meet in her education the opposition force of that universal petting and spoiling which everybody in society gives to an entertaining child.

Life is such a monotonous, dull affair, that anybody who has the gift of making it pass off gayly is in great demand. Tina was sent for to the parsonage, and the minister took her on his knee and encouraged her to chatter all sorts of egregious nonsense to him. And Miss Deborah Kittery insisted on having her sent for to visit them in Boston, and old Madam Kittery overwhelmed her with indulgence and caresses. Now Tina loved praises and caresses; incense

was the very breath of her nostrils; and she enjoyed being fêted and petted as much as a cat enjoys being stroked.

It will not be surprising to one who considers the career of this kind of girl to hear that she was not much of a student. What she learned was by impulses and fits and starts, and all of it immediately used for some specific purpose of entertainment, so that among simple people she had the reputation of being a prodigy of information, on a very small capital of actual knowledge. Miss Mehitable sighed after thorough knowledge and discipline of mind for her charge, but she invariably found all Tina's teachers becoming accomplices in her superficial practices by praising and caressing her when she had been least faithful, always apologizing for her deficiencies, and speaking in the most flattering terms of her talents. During the last year the schoolmaster had been observed always to walk home with her and bring her books, with a humble, trembling subserviency and prostrate humility which she rewarded with great apparent contempt; and finally she announced to Miss Mehitable that she "did n't intend to go to school any more, because the master acted so silly."

Now Miss Mehitable, during all her experience of life, had always associated with the men of her acquaintance without ever being reminded in any particular manner of the difference of sex, and it was a subject which, therefore, was about the last to enter into her calculations with regard to her little charge. So she said, "My dear, you should n't speak in that way about your teacher; he knows a great deal more than you do."

"He may know more than I do about arithmetic, but he does n't know how to behave. What right has he to put his old hand under my chin? and I won't have him putting his arm round me when he sets my copies! and I told him to-day he should n't carry my books home any more, — so there!"

Miss Mehitable was struck dumb. She went that afternoon and visited the minister's lady.

"Depend upon it, my dear," said Lady Lothrop, "it's time to try a course of home reading."

A bright idea now struck Miss Mehitable. Her cousin, Mr. Mordecai Rossiter, had recently been appointed a colleague with the venerable Dr. Lothrop. He was a young man, finely read, and of great solidity and piety, and Miss Mehitable resolved to invite him to take up his abode with them for the purpose of assisting her educational efforts. Mr. Mordecai Rossiter accordingly took up his abode in the family, used to conduct family worship, and was expected now and then to drop words of good advice and wholesome counsel to form the mind of Miss Tina. A daily hour was appointed during which he was to superintend her progress in arithmetic.

Mr. Mordecai Rossiter was one of the most simple-minded, honest, sincere human beings that ever wore a black coat. He accepted his charge in sacred simplicity, and took a prayerful view of his young catechumen, whom he was in hopes to make realize, by degrees, the native depravity of her own heart, and to lead through a gradual process to the best of all results.

Miss Tina also took a view of her instructor, and without any evil intentions, simply following her strongest instinct, which was to entertain and please, she very soon made herself an exceedingly delightful pupil. Since religion was evidently the engrossing subject in his mind, Tina also turned her attention to it, and instructed and edified him with flights of devout eloquence which were to him perfectly astonishing. Tina would discourse on the goodness of God, and ornament her remarks with so many flowers, and stars, and poetical fireworks, and be so rapt and carried away with her subject, that he would sit and listen to her as if she was an inspired being, and wholly forget the analysis

which he meant to propose to her, as to whether her emotions of love to God proceeded from self-love or from disinterested benevolence.

As I have said, Tina had a genius for poetry, and had employed the dull hours which children of her age usually spend in church in reading the psalm-book and committing to memory all the most vividly emotional psalms and hymns. And these she was fond of repeating with great fervor and enthusiasm to her admiring listener.

Miss Mehitable considered that the schoolmaster had been an ill-taught, presumptuous man, who had ventured to take improper liberties with a mere child; but, when she established this connection between this same child and a solemn young minister, it never occurred to her to imagine that there would be any embarrassing consequences from the relation. She considered Tina as a mere infant, — as not yet having approached the age when the idea of anything like love or marriage could possibly be suggested to her.

In course of time, however, she could not help remarking that her cousin was in some respects quite an altered man. He reformed many little negligences in regard to his toilet which Miss Tina had pointed out to him with the nonchalant freedom of a young empress. And he would run and spring and fetch and carry in her service with a zeal and alertness quite wonderful to behold. He expressed privately to Miss Mehitable the utmost astonishment at her mental powers, and spoke of the wonderful work of divine grace which appeared to have made such progress in her heart. Never had he been so instructed and delighted before by the exercises of any young person. And he went so far as to assure Miss Mehitable that in many things he should be only too happy to sit at her feet and learn of her.

"Good gracious me!" said Miss Mehitable to herself, with a sort of half start of awakening, though not yet fully

come to consciousness; "what does ail everybody that gets hold of Tina?"

What got hold of her cousin in this case she had an opportunity of learning, not long after, by overhearing him tell her young charge that she was an angel, and that he asked nothing more of Heaven than to be allowed to follow her lead through life. Now Miss Tina accepted this, as she did all other incense, with great satisfaction. Not that she had the slightest idea of taking this clumsy-footed theological follower round the world with her; but having the highest possible respect for him, knowing that Miss Mehitable and the minister and his wife thought him a person of consideration, she had felt it her duty to please him, — had taxed her powers of pleasing to the utmost, in his own line, and had met with this gratifying evidence of success.

Miss Mehitable was for once really angry. She sent for her cousin to a private interview, and thus addressed him: —

"Cousin Mordecai, I thought you were a man of sense when I put this child under your care! My great trouble in bringing her up is, that everybody flatters her and defers to her; but I thought that in you I had got a man that could be depended on!"

"I do not flatter her, cousin," replied the young minister earnestly.

"You pretend you don't flatter her? did n't I hear you calling her an angel?"

"Well, I don't care if I did; she is an angel," said Mr. Mordecai Rossiter, with tears in his eyes; "she is the most perfectly heavenly being I ever saw!"

"Ah! bah!" said Miss Mehitable, with intense disgust; "what fools you men are!"

Miss Mehitable now, much as she disliked it, felt bound to have some cautionary conversation with Miss Tina.

"My dear," she said, "you must be very careful in

your treatment of Cousin Mordecai. I overheard some things he said to you this morning which I do not approve of."

"Oh yes, Aunty, he does talk in a silly way sometimes. Men always begin to talk that way to me. Why, you 've no idea the things they will say. Well, of course I don't believe them; it 's only a foolish way they have, but they all talk just alike."

"But I thought my cousin would have had his mind on better things," said Miss Mehitable. "The idea of his making love to you!"

"I know it; only think of it, Aunty! how very funny it is! and there, I have n't done a single thing to make him. I 've been just as religious as I could be, and said hymns to him, and everything, and given him good advice, — ever so much, — because, you see, he did n't know about a great many things till I told him."

"But, my dear, all this is going to make him too fond of you; you know you ought not to be thinking of such things now."

"What things, Aunty?" said the catechumen innocently.

"Why, love and marriage; that 's what such feelings will come to, if you encourage them."

"Marriage! Oh dear me, what nonsense!" and Tina laughed till the room rang again. "Why, dear Aunty, what absurd ideas have got into your head! Of course you can't think that he 's thinking of any such thing; he 's only getting very fond of me, and I 'm trying to make him have a good time, — that 's all."

But Miss Tina found that was not all, and was provoked beyond endurance at the question proposed to her in plain terms, whether she would not look upon her teacher as one destined in a year or two to become her husband. Thereupon at once the whole gay fabric dissolved like a dream.

Tina was as vexed at the proposition as a young unbroken colt is at the sight of a halter. She cried, and said she did n't like him, she could n't bear him, and she never wanted to see him again, — that he was silly and ridiculous to talk so to a little girl. And Miss Mehitable sat down to write a long letter to her brother, to inquire what she should do next.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH TINA

My dear Brother, — I am in a complete *embarras* what to do with Tina. She is the very light of my eyes, — the sweetest, gayest, brightest, and best-meaning little mortal that ever was made; but somehow or other I fear I am not the one that ought to have undertaken to bring her up.

She has a good deal of self-will; so much that I have long felt it would be quite impossible for me to control her merely by authority. In fact, I laid down my sceptre long ago, such as it was. I never did have much of a gift in that way. But Tina's self-will runs in the channel of a most charming persuasiveness. She has all sorts of pretty phrases, and would talk a bird off from a bush, or a trout out of a brook, by dint of sheer persistent eloquence; and she is always so delightfully certain that her way is the right one and the best for me and all concerned. Then she has no end of those peculiar gifts of entertainment which are rather dangerous things for a young woman. She is a born mimic, she is a natural actress, and she has always a repartee or a smart saying quite apropos at the tip of her tongue. All this makes her an immense favorite with people who have no responsibility about her, — who merely want to be amused with her drolleries, and then shake their heads wisely when she is gone, and say that Miss Mehitable Rossiter ought to keep a close hand on that girl.

It seems to be the common understanding that everybody but me is to spoil her; for there is n't anybody, not even

Dr. Lothrop and his wife, that won't connive at her mimicking and fripperies, and then talk gravely with me afterward about the danger of these things, as if I were the only person to say anything disagreeable to her. But then, I can see very plainly that the little chit is in danger on all sides of becoming trivial and superficial, — of mistaking wit for wisdom, and thinking she has answered an argument when she has said a smart thing and raised a laugh.

Of late, trouble of another kind has been added. Tina is a little turned of fifteen; she is going to be very beautiful; she is very pretty now; and, in addition to all my other perplexities, the men are beginning to talk that atrocious kind of nonsense to her which they seem to think they must talk to young girls. I have had to take her away from the school on account of the schoolmaster, and when I put her under the care of Cousin Mordecai Rossiter, whom I thought old enough, and discreet enough, to make a useful teacher to her, he has acted like a natural fool. I have no kind of patience with him. I would not have believed a man could be so devoid of common sense. I shall have to send Tina somewhere, — though I can't bear to part with her, and it seems like taking the very sunshine out of the house; so I remember what you told me about sending her up to you.

Lady Lothrop and Lois Badger and I have been talking together, and we think the boys might as well go up too to your academy, as our present schoolmaster is not very competent, and you will give them a thorough fitting for college.

To this came the following reply: —

Sister Mehitable, — The thing has happened that I have foreseen. Send her up here; she shall board in the minister's family; and his daughter Esther, who is wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best, shall help keep her in order.

Send the boys along, too; they are bright fellows, as I remember, and I would like to have a hand at them. One of them might live with us and do the outdoor chores and help hoe in the garden, and the other might do the same for the minister. So send them along.

Your affectionate brother,

JONATHAN ROSSITER.

This was an era in our lives. Harry and I from this time felt ourselves to be men, and thereafter adopted the habit of speaking of ourselves familiarly as "a man of my character," "a man of my age," and "a man in my circumstances." The comfort and dignity which this imparted to us were wonderful. We also discussed Tina in a very paternal way, and gravely considered what was best for her. We were, of course, properly shocked at the behavior of the schoolmaster, and greatly applauded her spirit in defending herself against his presumption.

Then Tina had told Harry and me all about her trouble with the minister, and I remember at this time how extremely aged and venerable I felt, and what quantities of good advice I gave to Tina, which was all based on the supposition of her dangerously powerful charms and attractions. This is the edifying kind of counsel with which young gentlemen of my age instruct their lady friends, and it will be seen at once that advice and admonition which rest on the theory of superhuman excellence and attractions in the advised party are far more agreeable than the rough, common admonitions, generally addressed to boys at this time of life, which are unseasoned by any such pleasing hallucination.

There is now a general plea in society that women shall be educated more as men are, and we hear much talk as if the difference between them and our sex is merely one of difference in education. But how could it be helped that

Tina should be educated and formed wholly unlike Harry and myself, when every address made to her from her childhood was of necessity wholly different from what would be made to a boy in the same circumstances ? and particularly when she carried with her always that dizzying, blinding charm which turned the head of every boy and man that undertook to talk reason to her ?

In my own mind I had formed my plan of life. I was to go to college, and therefrom soar to an unmeasured height of literary distinction, and when I had won trophies and laurels and renown, I was to come back and lay all at Tina's feet. This was what Harry and I agreed on, in many a conversation, as the destined result of our friendship.

Harry and I had sworn friendship by all the solemn oaths and forms known in ancient or modern history. We changed names with each other, and in our private notes and letters addressed each by the name of the other, and felt as if this was some sacred and wonderful peculiarity. Tina called us both brothers, and this we agreed was the best means of preserving her artless mind unalarmed and undisturbed until the future hour of the great declaration. As for Tina, she absolutely could not keep anything to herself if she tried. Whatever agitated her mind or interested it had to be told to us. She did not seem able to rest satisfied with herself till she had proved to us that she was exactly right, or made us share her triumphs in her achievements, or her perplexity in her failures.

At this crisis Miss Mehitable talked very seriously and sensibly with her little charge. She pointed out to her the danger of living a trivial and superficial life, — of becoming vain, and living merely for admiration. She showed her how deficient she had been in those attainments which require perseverance and steadiness of mind, and earnestly recommended her now to devote herself to serious studies.

Nobody was a better subject to preach such a sermon to

than Tina. She would even take up the discourse and enlarge upon it, and suggest new and fanciful illustrations; she entered into the project of Miss Mehitable with enthusiasm; she confessed all her faults, and resolved hereafter to become a pattern of the contrary virtues. And then she came and related the whole conversation to us, and entered into the project of devoting herself to study with such a glow of enthusiasm, that we formed at once the most brilliant expectations.

The town of Cloudland, whither we were going, was a two days' journey up into the mountains; and, as traveling facilities then were, it was viewed as such an undertaking to send us there, that the whole family conclave talked gravely of it and discussed it in every point of view, for a fortnight before we started. Our Uncle Jacob, the good, meek, quiet farmer of whom I have spoken, had a little business in regard to some property that had been left by a relative of his wife in that place, and suggested the possibility of going up with us himself. So weighty a move was at first thrown out as a mere proposal to be talked of in the family circle. Grandmother and Aunt Lois and Aunt Keziah and my mother picked over and discussed this proposition for days, as a lot of hens will pick over an ear of corn, turning it from side to side, and looking at it from every possible point of view. Uncle Fliakim had serious thoughts of offering his well-worn equipage, but it was universally admitted that his constant charities had kept it in such a condition of frailty that the mountain roads would finish it, and thus deprive multitudes of the female population of Oldtown of an establishment which was about as much their own as if they had the care and keeping of it.

I don't know anybody who could have been taken from Oldtown whose loss would have been more universally felt and deplored than little Miss Tina's. In the first place, Oldtown had come into the way of regarding her as a sort of

Child of the Regiment, and then Tina was one of those sociable, acquaintance-making bodies that have visited everybody, penetrated everybody's affairs, and given a friendly lift now and then in almost everybody's troubles.

"Why, lordy massy!" said Sam Lawson, "I don't know nothin' what we 're any on us goin' to do when Tina 's gone. Why, there ain't a dog goes into the meetin'-house but wags his tail when he sees her a-comin'. I expect she knows about every yellow-bird's nest an' blue jay's an' bobolink's an' meadow-lark's that there 's ben round here these five years, an' how they 's goin' to set an' hatch without her 's best known to 'emselves, I s'pose. Lordy massy! that child can sing so like a skunk blackbird that you can't tell which is which. Wal, I 'll say one thing for her; she draws the fire out o' Hepsy, an' she 's 'bout the only livin' critter that can; but some nights when she 's ben inter our house a playin' checkers or fox an' geese with the child'en, she 'd railly git Hepsy slicked down so that 't was kind o' comfortable bein' with her. I 'm sorry she 's goin', for my part, an' all the child'en 'll be sorry."

As for Polly, she worked night and day on Tina's outfit, and scolded and hectored herself for certain tears that now and then dropped on the white aprons that she was ironing. On the night before Tina was to depart, Polly came into her room and insisted upon endowing her with her string of gold beads, the only relic of earthly vanity in which that severe female had ever been known to indulge. Tina was quite melted, and fell upon her neck.

"Why, Polly! No, no; you dear old creature, you, you 've been a thousand times too good for me, and I 've nearly plagued the life out of you, and you sha'n't give me your poor, dear, old gold beads, but keep them yourself, for you 're as good as gold any day, and so it 's a great deal better that you should wear them."

"O Tina, child, you don't know my heart," said Polly,

shaking her head solemnly; "if you could see the depths of depravity that there are there!"

"I don't believe a word of it, Polly."

"Ah! but, you see, the Lord seeth not as man sees, Tina."

"I know he don't," said Tina; "he 's a thousand times kinder, and makes a thousand more excuses for us than we ever do for ourselves or each other. You know the Bible says, 'He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust.'"

"O Tina, Tina, you always was a wonderful child to talk," said Polly, shaking her head doubtfully; "but then you know the heart is so deceitful, and then you see there 's the danger that we should mistake natural emotions for grace."

"Oh, I dare say there are all sorts of dangers," said Tina; "of course there are. I know I 'm nothing but just a poor little silly bird; but He knows it too, and he 's taken care of ever so many such little silly people as I am, so that I 'm not afraid. He won't let me deceive myself. You know, when that bird got shut in the house the other day, how much time you and I and Miss Mehitable all spent in trying to keep it from breaking its foolish head against the glass, and flying into the fire, and all that, and how glad we were when we got it safe out into the air. I 'm sure we are not half as good as God is, and, if we take so much care about a poor little bird that we did n't make and had nothing to do with, he must care a good deal more about us when we are his children. And God is all the Father I have or ever knew."

This certainly looked to Polly like very specious reasoning, but, after all, the faithful creature groaned in spirit. Might not this all be mere natural religion and not the supernatural grace? So she said, trembling, "O Tina, did you always feel so towards God? wa'n't there a time when your heart rose in opposition to him?"

"Oh, certainly," said Tina; "when Miss Asphyxia used to talk to me about it, I thought I never wanted to hear of him, and I never said my prayers; but as soon as I came to Aunty, she was so loving and kind that I began to see what God must be like, — because I know he is kinder than she can be, or you, or anybody can be. That's so, is n't it? You know the Bible says his loving-kindness is infinite."

The thing in this speech which gave Polly such peculiar satisfaction was the admission that there had been a definite point of time in which the feelings of her little friend had undergone a distinct change. Henceforth she was better satisfied, — never reflecting how much she was trusting to a mere state of mind in the child, instead of resting her faith on the Almighty Friend who so evidently had held her in charge during the whole of her short history.

As for me, the eve of my departure was to me one of triumph. When I had seen all my father's Latin books fairly stowed away in my trunk, with the very simple wardrobe which belonged to Harry and me, and the trunk had been shut and locked and corded, and we were to start at sunrise the next morning, I felt as if my father's unfulfilled life-desire was at last going to be accomplished in me.

It was a bright, clear, starlight night in June, and we were warned to go to bed early, that we might be ready in season the next morning. As usual, Harry fell fast asleep, and I was too nervous and excited to close my eyes. I began to think of the old phantasmagoria of my childish days, which now so seldom appeared to me. I felt stealing over me that peculiar thrill and vibration of the great central nerves which used to indicate the approach of those phenomena, and, looking up, I saw distinctly my father, exactly as I used to see him, standing between the door and the bed. It seemed to me that he entered by passing through the door, but there he was, every line and lineament of his

face, every curl of his hair, exactly as I remembered it. His eyes were fixed on mine with a tender human radiance. There was something soft and compassionate about the look he gave me, and I felt it vibrating on my nerves with that peculiar electric thrill of which I have spoken. I learned by such interviews as these how spirits can communicate with one another without human language.

The appearance of my father was vivid and real even to the clothing that he used to wear, which was earthly and homelike, precisely as I remembered it. Yet I felt no disposition to address him, and no need of words. Gradually the image faded; it grew thinner and fainter, and I saw the door through it as if it had been a veil, and then it passed away entirely.

What are these apparitions? I know that this will be read by many who have seen them quite as plainly as I have, who, like me, have hushed back the memory of them into the most secret and silent chamber of their hearts.

I know, with regard to myself, that the sight of my father was accompanied by such a vivid conviction of the reality of his presence, such an assurance radiated from his serene eyes that he had at last found the secret of eternal peace, such an intense conviction of continued watchful affection and of sympathy in the course that I was now beginning, that I could not have doubted if I would. And when we remember that, from the beginning of the world, some such possible communication between departed love and the beloved on earth has been among the most cherished legends of humanity, why must we always meet such phenomena with a resolute determination to account for them by every or any supposition but that which the human heart most craves? Is not the great mystery of life and death made more cruel and inexorable by this rigid incredulity? One would fancy, to hear some moderns talk, that there was no possibility that the departed, even when

most tender and most earnest, could, if they would, recall themselves to their earthly friends.

For my part, it was through some such experiences as these that I learned that there are truths of the spiritual life which are intuitive, and above logic, which a man must believe because he cannot help it, — just as he believes the facts of his daily experience in the world of matter, though most ingenious and unanswerable treatises have been written to show that there is no proof of its existence.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE JOURNEY TO CLOUDLAND

THE next morning Aunt Lois rapped at our door, when there was the very faintest red streak in the east, and the birds were just in the midst of that vociferous singing which nobody knows anything about who is n't awake at this precise hour. We were forward enough to be up and dressed, and, before our breakfast was through, Uncle Jacob came to the door.

The agricultural population of Massachusetts, at this time, were a far more steady set as regards locomotion than they are in these days of railroads. At this time, a journey from Boston to New York took a fortnight, — a longer time than it now takes to go to Europe, — and my Uncle Jacob had never been even to Boston. In fact, the seven-mile tavern in the neighborhood had been the extent of his wanderings, and it was evident that he regarded the two days' journey as quite a solemn event in his life. He had given a fortnight's thought to it; he had arranged all his worldly affairs, and given charges and messages to his wife and children, in case, as he said, "anything should happen to him." And he informed Aunt Lois that he had been awake the biggest part of the night thinking it over. But when he had taken Tina and her little trunk on board, and we had finished all our hand-shakings, and Polly had told us over for the fourth or fifth time exactly where she had put the cold chicken and the biscuits and the cakes and pie, and Miss Mehitable had cautioned Tina again and again to put on her shawl in case a shower should come up, and

my grandmother and Aunt Lois had put in their share of parting admonitions, we at last trolled off as cheery and merry a set of youngsters as the sun ever looked upon in a dewy June morning.

Our road lay first along the beautiful brown river, with its sweeping bends, and its prattling curves of water dashing and chattering over mossy rocks. Towards noon we began to find ourselves winding up and up amid hemlock forests, whose solemn shadows were all radiant and aglow with clouds of blossoming laurel. We had long hills to wind up, when we got out and walked, and gathered flowers, and scampered, and chased the brook up stream from one little dashing waterfall to another, and then, suddenly darting out upon the road again, we would meet the wagon at the top of the hill.

Can there be anything on earth so beautiful as these mountain rides in New England? At any rate we were full in the faith that there could not. When we were riding in the wagon, Tina's powers of entertainment were brought into full play. The great success of the morning was her exact imitation of a squirrel eating a nut, which she was requested to perform many times, and which she did, with variations, until at last Uncle Jacob remarked, with a grin, that "if he should meet her and a squirrel sitting on a stone fence together, he believed he should n't know which was which."

Besides this, we acted various impromptu plays, assuming characters and supporting them as we had been accustomed to do in our theatrical rehearsals in the garret, till Uncle Jacob declared that he never did see such a musical set as we were. About nightfall we came to Uncle Sim Geary's tavern, which had been fixed upon for our stopping-place. This was neither more nor less than a mountain farmhouse where the few travelers who ever passed that way could find accommodation.

Uncle Jacob, after seeing to his horses, and partaking of a plentiful supper, went immediately to bed, as was his innocent custom every evening, as speedily as possible. To bed, but not to sleep, for when, an hour or two afterward, I had occasion to go into his room, I found him lying on his bed with his clothes on, his shoes merely slipped off, and his hat held securely over the pit of his stomach.

"Why, Uncle Jacob," said I, "aren't you going to bed?"

"Well, I guess I'll just lie down as I be; no knowin' what may happen when you're traveling. It's a very nice house, and a very respectable family, but it's best always to be prepared for anything that may happen. So I think you children had better all go to bed and keep quiet."

What roars of laughter there were among us when I described this scene and communicated the message of Uncle Jacob! It seemed as if Tina could not be got to sleep that night, and we could hear her giggling, through the board partition that separated our room from hers, every hour of the night.

Happy are the days when one can go to sleep and wake up laughing. The next morning, however, Uncle Jacob reaped the reward of his vigilance by finding himself ready dressed at six o'clock, when I came in and found him sleeping profoundly. The fact was, that, having kept awake till near morning, he was sounder asleep at this point of time than any of us, and was snoring away like a grist-mill. He remarked that he shouldn't wonder if he had dropped asleep, and added, in a solemn tone, "We've got through the night wonderfully, all things considered."

The next day's ride was the same thing over, only the hills were longer; and by and by we came into great vistas of mountains, whose cloudy purple heads seemed to stretch and veer around our path like the phantasmagoria

of a dream. Sometimes the road seemed to come straight up against an impenetrable wall, and we would wonder what we were to do with it; but lo! as we approached, the old mountain seemed gracefully to slide aside, and open to us a passage round it. Tina found ever so many moralities and poetical images in these mountains. It was like life, she said. Your way would seem all shut up before you, but, if you only had faith and went on, the mountains would move aside for you and let you through.

Towards night we began to pull in earnest up a series of ascents toward the little village of Cloudland. Hill after hill, hill after hill, how long they seemed! but how beautiful it was when the sun went down over the distant valleys! and there was such a pomp and glory of golden clouds and rosy vapors wreathing around the old mountain-tops as one must go to Cloudland to know anything about.

At last we came to a little terrace of land, where were a white meeting-house, and a store, and two or three houses, and to the door of one of these our wagon drove. There stood Mr. Jonathan Rossiter and the minister and Esther. You do not know Esther, do you? neither at this minute did we. We saw a tall, straight, graceful girl, who looked at us out of a pair of keen, clear, hazel eyes, with a sort of inquisitive yet not unkindly glance, but as if she meant to make up her mind about us; and when she looked at Tina I could see that her mind was made up in a moment.

LETTER FROM TINA TO MISS MEHITABLE.

CLOUDLAND, June 6.

Here we are, dear Aunty, up in the skies, in the most beautiful place that you can possibly conceive of. We had such a good time coming! you've no idea of the fun we had. You know I am going to be very sober, but I did n't think it was necessary to begin while we were traveling, and

we kept Uncle Jacob laughing so that I really think he must have been tired.

Do you know, Aunty, I have got so that I can look exactly like a squirrel? We saw ever so many on the way, and I got a great many new hints on the subject, and now I can do squirrel in four or five different attitudes, and the boys almost killed themselves laughing.

Harry is an old sly-boots. Do you know, he is just as much of a mimic as I am, for all he looks so sober; but when we get him a-going he is perfectly killing. He and I and Horace acted all sorts of plays on the way. We agreed with each other that we 'd give a set of Oldtown representations, and see if Uncle Jacob would know who they were, and so Harry was Sam Lawson and I was Hepsy, and I made an unexceptionable baby out of our two shawls, and Horace was Uncle Fliakim come in to give us moral exhortations. I do wish you could hear how we did it. Uncle Jacob is n't the brightest of all mortals, and not very easily roused, but we made him laugh till he said his sides were sore; and to pay for it he made us laugh when we got to the tavern where we stopped all night. Do you believe, Aunty, Uncle Jacob really was frightened, or careworn, or something, so that he hardly slept any all night? It was just the quietest place that ever you saw, and there was a good motherly woman, who got us the nicest kind of supper, and a peaceable, slow, dull old man, just like Uncle Jacob. There was n't the least thing that looked as if we had fallen into a cave of banditti, or a castle in the Apennines, such as Mrs. Radcliffe tells about in the "Mysteries of Udolpho;" but, for all that, Uncle Jacob's mind was so oppressed with care that he went to bed with all his clothes on, and lay broad awake with his hat in his hand all night. I did n't think before that Uncle Jacob had such a brilliant imagination. Poor man! I should have thought he would have lain down and slept as peaceably as one of his own oxen.

We got up into Cloudland about half past six o'clock in the afternoon, the second day; and such a sunset! I thought of a good subject for a little poem, and wrote two or three verses, which I 'll send you some time; but I must tell you now about the people here.

I don't doubt I shall become very good, for just think what a place I am in, — living at the minister's! and then I room with Esther! You ought to see Esther. She 's a beautiful girl; she 's tall, and straight, and graceful, with smooth black hair, and piercing dark eyes that look as if they could read your very soul. Her face has the features of a statue, at least such as I think some of the beautiful statues that I 've read about might have; and what makes it more statuesque is, that she 's so very pale; she is perfectly healthy, but there does n't seem to be any red blood in her cheeks; and, dear Aunty, she is alarmingly good. She knows so much, and does so much, that it is really discouraging to me to think of it. Why, do you know, she has read through Virgil, and is reading a Greek tragedy now with Mr. Rossiter; and she teaches a class in mathematics in school, besides being her father's only housekeeper, and taking care of her younger brothers.

I should be frightened to death at so much goodness, if it were not that she seems to have taken the greatest possible fancy to me. As I told you, we room together; and such a nice room as it is! everything is just like wax; and she gave me half of everything, — half the drawers and half the closet, and put all my things so nicely in their places, and then in the morning she gets up at unheard-of hours, and she was beginning to pet me and tell me that I need n't get up. Now you know, Aunty, that 's just the way people are always doing with me, and the way poor dear old Polly would spoil me; but I told Esther all about my new resolutions and exactly how good I intended to be, and that I thought I could n't do better than to do everything that

she did, and so when she gets up I get up; and really, Aunty, you 've no idea what a sight the sunrise is here in the mountains; it really is worth getting up for.

We have breakfast at six o'clock, and then there are about three hours before school, and I help Esther wash up the breakfast things, and we make our bed and sweep our room, and put everything up nice, and then I have ever so long to study, while Esther is seeing to all her family cares and directing black Dinah about the dinner, and settling any little cases that may arise among her three younger brothers. They are great, strong, nice boys, with bright red cheeks, and a good capacity for making a noise, but she manages them nicely. Dear Aunty, I hope some of her virtues will rub off on to me by contact; don't you?

I don't think your brother likes me much. He hardly noticed me at all when I was first presented to him, and seemed to have forgotten that he had ever seen me. I tried to talk to him, but he cut me quite short, and turned round and went to talking to Mr. Avery, the minister, you know. I think that these people that know so much might be civil to us little folks, but then I dare say it 's all right enough; but sometimes it does seem as if he wanted to snub me. Well, perhaps it 's good for me to be snubbed: I have such good times generally that I ought to have something that is n't quite so pleasant.

Life is to me such a beautiful story! and every morning when I open my eyes and see things looking so charming as they do here, I thank God that I am alive.

Mr. Rossiter has been examining the boys in their studies. He is n't a man that ever praises anybody, I suppose, but I can see that he is pretty well pleased with them. We have a lady principal, Miss Titcomb. She is about forty years old, I should think, and very pleasant and affable. I shall tell you more about these things by and by.

Give my love to dear old Polly, and to grandma and Aunt Lois, and all the nice folks in Oldtown.

Dear Aunty, sometimes I used to think that you were depressed, and had troubles that you did not tell me; and something you said once about your life being so wintry made me quite sad. Do let me be your little Spring, and think always how dearly I love you, and how good I am going to try to be for your sake.

Your own affectionate little TINA.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SCHOOL LIFE IN CLOUDLAND

THE academy in Cloudland was one of those pure wells from which the hidden strength of New England is drawn, as her broad rivers are made from hidden mountain brooks. The first object of every colony, in New England, after building the church, was to establish a schoolhouse ; and a class of the most superior men of New England, in those days of simple living, were perfectly satisfied to make it the business of their lives to teach in the small country academies with which the nooks and hollows of New England were filled.

Could materials be got as profuse as Boswell's "Life of Johnson" to illustrate the daily life and table-talk of some of the academy schoolmasters of this period, it would be an acquisition for the world. For that simple, pastoral germ-state of society is a thing forever gone. Never again shall we see that union of perfect repose in regard to outward surroundings and outward life with that intense activity of the inward and intellectual world, that made New England, at this time, the vigorous, germinating seed-bed for all that has since been developed of politics, laws, letters, and theology, through New England to America, and through America to the world. The hurry of railroads, and the rush and roar of business that now fill it, would have prevented that germinating process. It was necessary that there should be a period like that we describe, when villages were each a separate little democracy, shut off by rough roads and forests from the rest of the world, organized round the church and

school as a common centre, and formed by the minister and the schoolmaster.

The academy of Cloudland had become celebrated in the neighborhood for the skill and ability with which it was conducted, and pupils had been drawn, even from as far as Boston, to come and sojourn in our mountain town to partake of these advantages. They were mostly young girls, who were boarded at very simple rates in the various families of the place. In all, the pupils of the academy numbered about a hundred, equally divided between the two sexes. There was a class of about fifteen young men who were preparing for college, and a greater number of boys who were studying with the same ultimate hope.

As a general rule, the country academies of Massachusetts have been equally open to both sexes. Andover and Exeter, so far as I know, formed the only exceptions to this rule, being by their charters confined rigorously to the use of the dominant sex. But, in the generality of country academies, the girls and boys studied side by side, without any other restriction as to the character of their studies than personal preference. As a general thing, the classics and the higher mathematics were more pursued by the boys than the girls. But if there were a daughter of Eve who wished, like her mother, to put forth her hand to the tree of knowledge, there was neither cherubim nor flaming sword to drive her away.

Mr. Rossiter was always stimulating the female part of his subjects to such undertakings, and the consequence was that in his school an unusual number devoted themselves to these pursuits, and the leading scholar in Greek and the higher mathematics was our new acquaintance, Esther Avery.

The female principal, Miss Titcomb, was a thoroughbred, old-fashioned lady, whose views of education were formed by Miss Hannah More, and whose style, like Miss Hannah More's, was profoundly Johnsonian. This lady had com-

posed a set of rules for the conduct of the school, in the most ornate and resounding periods. The rules, briefly epitomized, required of us *only* absolute moral perfection, but they were run into details which caused the reading of them to take up about a quarter of an hour every Saturday morning. I would that I could remember some of the sentences. It was required of us all, for one thing, that we should be perfectly polite. "Persons truly polite," it was added, "invariably treat their superiors with reverence, their equals with exact consideration, and their inferiors with condescension." Again, under the head of manners, we were warned, "not to consider romping as indicative of sprightliness, or loud laughter a mark of wit." The scene every Saturday morning, when these rules were read to a set of young people on whom the mountain air acted like champagne, and among whom both romping and loud laughter were fearfully prevalent, was sufficiently edifying.

There was also a system of marks, quite complicated, by which our departure from any of these virtuous proprieties was indicated. After a while, however, the reciting of these rules, like the reading of the Ten Commandments in churches, and a great deal of other good substantial reading, came to be looked upon only as a Saturday morning decorum, and the Johnsonian periods, which we all knew by heart, were principally useful in pointing a joke. Nevertheless, we were not a badly behaved set of young people.

Miss Titcomb exercised a general supervision over the manners, morals, and health of the young ladies connected with the institution, taught history and geography, and also gave especial attention to female accomplishments. These, so far as I could observe, consisted largely in embroidering mourning pieces, with a family monument in the centre, a green ground worked in chenille and floss silk, with an exuberant willow-tree, and a number of weeping mourners, whose faces were often concealed by flowing pocket-handkerchiefs.

Pastoral pieces were also in great favor, representing fair young shepherdesses sitting on green chenille banks, with crooks in their hands, and tending some animals of an uncertain description, which were to be received by faith as sheep. The sweet, confiding innocence which regarded the making of objects like these as more suited to the tender female character than the pursuit of Latin and mathematics was characteristic of the ancient régime. Did not Penelope embroider, and all sorts of princesses, ancient and modern? and was not embroidery a true feminine grace? Even Esther Avery, though she found no time for works of this kind, looked upon it with respect, as an accomplishment for which nature unfortunately had not given her a taste.

Mr. Rossiter, although he of course would not infringe on the kingdom of his female associate, treated these accomplishments with a scarce concealed contempt. It was, perhaps, the frosty atmosphere of skepticism which he breathed about him, touching those works of art, that prevented his favorite scholars from going far in the direction of such accomplishments. The fact is, that Mr. Rossiter, during the sailor period of his life, had been to the Mediterranean, had seen the churches of Spain and Italy, and knew what Murillos and Titians were like, which may account somewhat for the glances of civil amusement which he sometimes cast over into Miss Titcomb's department, when the adjuncts and accessories of a family tombstone were being eagerly discussed.

Mr. Jonathan Rossiter held us all by the sheer force of his personal character and will, just as the ancient mariner held the wedding guest with his glittering eye. He so utterly scorned and contemned a lazy scholar, that trifling and inefficiency in study were scorched and withered by the very breath of his nostrils. We were so awfully afraid of his opinion, we so hoped for his good word and so dreaded his contempt, and we so verily believed that no such man ever

walked this earth, that he had only to shake his ambrosial locks and give the nod, to settle us all as to any matter whatever.

In an age when in England schools were managed by the grossest and most brutal exercise of corporal punishment, the schoolmasters of New England, to a great extent, had entirely dropped all resort to such barbarous measures, and carried on their schools as republics, by the sheer force of moral and intellectual influences. Mr. Jonathan Rossiter would have been ashamed of himself at even the suggestion of caning a boy, — as if he were incapable of any higher style of government. And yet never was a man more feared and his will had in more awful regard. Mr. Rossiter was sparing of praise, but his praise bore a value in proportion to its scarcity. It was like diamonds and rubies, — few could have it, but the whole of his little commonwealth were working for it.

He scorned all conventional rules in teaching, and he would not tolerate a mechanical lesson, and took delight in puzzling his pupils and breaking up all routine business by startling and unexpected questions and assertions. He compelled every one to think, and to think for himself. "Your heads may not be the best in the world," was one of his sharp, off-hand sayings, "but they are the best God has given you, and you must use them for yourselves."

To tell the truth, he used his teaching somewhat as a mental gratification for himself. If there was a subject he wanted to investigate, or an old Greek or Latin author that he wanted to dig out, he would put a class on it, without the least regard to whether it was in the course of college preparation or not, and if a word was said by any poor mechanical body, he would blast out upon him with a sort of despotic scorn.

"Learn to read Greek perfectly," he said, "and it 's no matter what you read ; " or, "Learn to use your own heads, and you can learn anything."

There was little idling and no shirking in his school, but a slow, dull, industrious fellow, if he showed a disposition to work steadily, got more notice from him than even a bright one.

Mr. Rossiter kept house by himself in a small cottage adjoining that of the minister. His housekeeper, Miss Minerva Randall, generally known to the village as "Miss Nervy Randall," was one of those preternaturally well-informed old mermaids who, so far as I know, are a peculiar product of the State of Maine. Study and work had been the two passions of her life, and in neither could she be excelled by man or woman. Single handed, and without a servant, she performed all the labors of Mr. Jonathan Rossiter's little establishment. She washed for him, ironed for him, plaited his ruffled shirts in neatest folds, brushed his clothes, cooked his food, occasionally hoed in the garden, trained flowers around the house, and found, also, time to read Greek and Latin authors, and to work out problems in mathematics and surveying and navigation, and to take charge of boys in reading Virgil.

Miss Minerva Randall was one of those female persons who are of Sojourner Truth's opinion, — that if women want any rights they had better take them, and say nothing about it. Her sex had never occurred to her as a reason for doing or not doing anything which her hand found to do. In the earlier part of her life, for the mere love of roving and improving her mind by seeing foreign countries, she had gone on a Mediterranean voyage with her brother Zachariah Randall, who was wont to say of her that she was a better mate than any man he could find. And true enough, when he was confined to his berth with a fever, Miss Minerva not only nursed him, but navigated the ship home in the most matter-of-fact way in the world. She had no fol-de-rol about woman's rights, but she was always wide-awake to perceive when a thing was to be done, and to do it. Nor

did she ever after in her life talk of this exploit as a thing to be boasted of, seeming to regard it as a matter too simple, and entirely in the natural course of things, to be mentioned. Miss Minerva, however, had not enough of the external illusive charms of her sex to suggest to a casual spectator any doubt on that score of the propriety of her doing or not doing anything. Although she had not precisely the air of a man, she had very little of what usually suggests the associations of femininity. There was a sort of fishy quaintness about her that awakened grim ideas of some unknown ocean product, — a wild and withered appearance, like a wind-blown juniper on a sea promontory, — unsightly and stunted, yet not, after all, commonplace or vulgar. She was short, square, and broad, and the circumference of her waist was if anything greater where that of other females decreases. What the color of her hair might have been in days of youthful bloom was not apparent; but she had, when we knew her, thin tresses of a pepper-and-salt mixture of tint, combed tightly, and twisted in a very small nut on the back of her head, and fastened with a reddish-yellowish horn comb. Her small black eyes were overhung by a grizzled thicket of the same mixed color as her hair. For the graces of the toilet, Miss Nervy had no particular esteem. Her clothing and her person, as well as her housekeeping and belongings, were of a scrupulous and wholesome neatness; but the idea of any other beauty than that of utility had never suggested itself to her mind. She wore always a stuff petticoat of her own spinning, with a striped linen short gown, and probably in all her life never expended twenty dollars a year for clothing; and yet Miss Nervy was about the happiest female person whose acquaintance it has ever been my fortune to make. She had just as much as she wanted of exactly the two things she liked best in the world, — books and work, and when her work was done, there were the books, and life could give

no more. Miss Nervy had no sentiment, — not a particle of romance, — she was the most perfectly contented mortal that could possibly be imagined. As to station and position, she was as well known and highly respected in Cloudland as the schoolmaster himself: she was one of the fixed facts of the town, as much as the meeting-house. Days came and went, and spring flowers and autumn leaves succeeded each other, and boys and girls, like the spring flowers and autumn leaves, came and went in Cloudland Academy, but there was always Miss Nervy Randall, not a bit older, not a bit changed, doing her spinning and her herb-drying, working over her butter and plaiting Mr. Jonathan's ruffled shirts and teaching her Virgil class. What gave a piquancy to Miss Nervy's discourse was, that she always clung persistently to the racy Yankee dialect of her childhood, and when she was discoursing of Latin and the classics the idioms made a droll mixture. She was the most invariably good-natured of mortals, and helpful to the last degree; and she would always stop her kitchen work, take her hands out of the bread, or turn away from her yeast in a critical moment, to show a puzzled boy the way through a hard Latin sentence.

"Why, don't you know what that 'ere is?" she would say. "That 'ere is part of the gerund in *dum;* you 've got to decline it, and then you 'll find it. Look here!" she would say; "run that 'ere through the moods an' tenses, and ye 'll git it in the subjunctive;" or, "Massy, child! that 'ere is one o' the deponent verbs. 'T ain't got any active form; them deponent verbs allus does trouble boys till they git used to 'em."

Now these provincialisms might have excited the risibles of so keen a set of grammarians as we were, only that Miss Randall was a dead shot in any case of difficulty presented by the learned languages. No matter how her English phrased it, she had taught so many boys that she knew every

hard rub and difficult stepping-stone and tight place in the Latin grammar by heart, and had relief at her tongue's end for any distressed beginner.

In the cottage over which Miss Randall presided, Harry and I had our room, and we were boarded at the master's table; and so far we were fortunate. Our apartment, which was a roof-room of a gambrel-roofed cottage, was, to be sure, unplastered and carpetless; but it looked out through the boughs of a great apple-tree, up a most bewildering blue vista of mountains, whence the sight of a sunset was something forever to be remembered. All our physical appointments, though rustically plain, were kept by Miss Nervy in the utmost perfection of neatness. She had as great a passion for soap and sand as she had for Greek roots, and probably for the same reason. These wild seacoast countries seemed to produce a sort of superfluity of energy which longed to wreak itself on something, and delighted in digging and delving mentally as well as physically.

Our table had a pastoral perfection in the articles of bread and butter, with honey furnished by Miss Minerva's bees, and game and fish brought in by the united woodcraft of the minister and Mr. Rossiter.

Mr. Rossiter pursued all the natural sciences with an industry and enthusiasm only possible to a man who lives in so lonely and retired a place as Cloudland, and who has, therefore, none of the thousand dissipations of time resulting from our modern system of intercommunication, which is fast producing a state of shallow and superficial knowledge. He had a ponderous herbarium, of some forty or fifty folios, of his own collection and arrangement, over which he gloated with affectionate pride. He had a fine mineralogical cabinet; and there was scarcely a ledge of rocks within a circuit of twelve miles that had not resounded to the tap of his stone hammer and furnished specimens for his collection; and he had an entomologic collection, where

luckless bugs impaled on steel pins stuck in thin sheets of cork struggled away a melancholy existence, martyrs to the taste for science. The tender-hearted among us sometimes ventured a remonstrance in favor of these hapless beetles, but were silenced by the authoritative dictum of Mr. Rossiter. "Insects," he declared, "are unsusceptible of pain, the structure of their nervous organization forbidding the idea, and their spasmodic action being simply nervous contraction." As nobody has ever been inside of a beetle to certify to the contrary, and as the race have no mode of communication, we all found it comfortable to put implicit faith in Mr. Rossiter's statements till better advised.

It was among the awe-inspiring legends that were current of Mr. Rossiter in the school, that he corresponded with learned men in Norway and Sweden, Switzerland and France, to whom he sent specimens of American plants and minerals and insects, receiving in return those of other countries. Even in that remote day, little New England had her eyes and her thoughts and her hands everywhere where ship could sail.

Mr. Rossiter dearly loved to talk and to teach, and out of school hours it was his delight to sit surrounded by his disciples, to answer their questions, and show them his herbarium and his cabinet, to organize woodland tramps, and to start us on researches similar to his own. It was fashionable in his school to have private herbariums and cabinets, and before a month was passed our garret-room began to look quite like a grotto. In short, Mr. Rossiter's system resembled that of those gardeners who, instead of bending all their energies toward making a handsome head to a young tree, encourage it to burst out in suckers clear down to the root, bringing every part of it into vigorous life and circulation.

I still remember the blessed old fellow, as he used to sit among us on the steps of his house, in some of those

resplendent moonlight nights which used to light up Cloudland like a fairy dream. There he still sits, in memory, with his court around him, — Esther, with the thoughtful shadows in her eyes and the pensive Psyche profile, and Tina, ever restless, changing, enthusiastic, Harry with his sly, reticent humor and silent enjoyment, and he, our master, talking of everything under the sun, past, present, and to come, — of the cathedrals and pictures of Europe, describing those he had not seen apparently with as minute a knowledge as those he had, — of plants and animals, — of the ancients and the moderns, — of theology, metaphysics, grammar, rhetoric, or whatever came uppermost, — always full and suggestive, startling us with paradoxes, provoking us to arguments, setting us out to run eager tilts of discussion with him, yet in all holding us in a state of unmeasured admiration. Was he conscious, our great man and master, of that weakness of his nature which made an audience, and an admiring one, always a necessity to him? Of a soul naturally self-distrustful and melancholy, he needed to be constantly reinforced and built up in his own esteem by the suffrage of others. What seemed the most trenchant self-assertion in him was, after all, only the desperate struggles of a drowning man to keep his head above water; and, though he seemed at times to despise us all, our good opinion, our worship and reverence, were the raft that kept him from sinking in despair.

The first few weeks that Tina was in school, it was evident that Mr. Rossiter considered her as a spoiled child of fortune, whom the world had conspired to injure by overmuch petting. He appeared resolved at once to change the atmosphere and the diet. For some time in school it seemed as if she could do nothing to please him. He seemed determined to put her through a sort of Spartan drill, with hard work and small praise.

Tina had received from nature and womanhood that

inspiration in dress and toilet attraction which led her always and instinctively to some little form of personal adornment. Every wild spray or fluttering vine in our woodland rambles seemed to suggest to her some caprice of ornamentation. Each day she had some new thing in her hair, — now a feathery fern-leaf, and anon some wild red berry, whose presence just where she placed it was as picturesque as a French lithograph; and we boys were in the habit of looking each day to see what she would wear next. One morning she came into school, fair as Ariadne, with her viny golden curls rippling over and around a crown of laurel blossoms. She seemed to us like a little woodland poem. We all looked at her, and complimented her, and she received our compliments, as she always did coin of that sort, with the most undisguised and radiant satisfaction. Mr. Rossiter was in one of his most savage humors this morning, and eyed the pretty toilet grimly. "If you had only an equal talent for ornamenting the inside of your head," he said to her, "there might be some hopes of you."

Tears of mortification came into Tina's eyes, as she dashed the offending laurel blossoms out of the window, and bent resolutely over her book. At recess time she strolled out with me into the pine woods back of the schoolhouse, and we sat down on a mossy log together, and I comforted her and took her part.

"I don't care, Horace," she said, — "I don't care!" and she dashed the tears out of her eyes. "I'll make that man like me yet, — you see if I don't. He shall like me before I'm done with him, so there! I don't care how much he scolds. I'll give in to him, and do exactly as he tells me, but I'll conquer him, — you see if I don't."

And true enough Miss Tina from this time brushed her curly hair straight as such rebellious curls possibly could be brushed, and dressed herself as plainly as Esther, and

went at study as if her life depended on it. She took all Mr. Rossiter's snubs and despiteful sayings with the most prostrate humility, and now we began to learn, to our astonishment, what a mind the little creature had. In all my experience of human beings, I never saw one who learned so easily as she. It was but a week or two after she began the Latin grammar before, jumping over all the intermediate books, she alighted in a class in Virgil among scholars who had been studying for a year, and kept up with them, and in some respects stood clearly as the first scholar. The *vim* with which the little puss went at it, the zeal with which she turned over the big dictionary and whirled the leaves of the grammar, the almost inspiration which she showed in seizing the poetical shading of words over which her more prosaic companions blundered, were matters of never-ending astonishment and admiration to Harry and myself. At the end of the first week she gravely announced to us that she intended to render Virgil into English verse; and we had not the smallest doubt that she would do it, and were so immensely wrought up about it that we talked of it after we went to bed that night. Tina, in fact, had produced quite a clever translation of the first ten lines of "Arma virumque," etc., and we wondered what Mr. Rossiter would say to it. One of us stepped in and laid it on his writing-desk.

"Which of you boys did this?" he said the next morning, in not a disapproving tone.

There was a pause, and he slowly read the lines aloud.

"Pretty fair!" he said, — "pretty fair! I should n't be surprised if that boy should be able to write English one of these days."

"If you please, sir," said I, "it 's Miss Tina Percival that wrote that."

Tina's cheeks were red enough as he handed her back her poetry.

"Not bad," he said, — "not bad; keep on as you've begun, and you may come to something yet."

This scanty measure of approbation was interpreted as high praise, and we complimented Tina on her success. The project of making a poetical translation of Virgil, however, was not carried out, though every now and then she gave us little jets and spurts, which kept up our courage.

Bless me, how we did study everything in that school! English grammar, for instance. The whole school was divided into a certain number of classes, each under a leader, and at the close of every term came on a great examination, which was like a tournament or passage at arms in matters of the English language. To beat in this great contest of knowledge was what excited all our energies. Mr. Rossiter searched out the most difficult specimens of English literature for us to parse, and we were given to understand that he was laying up all the most abstruse problems of grammar to propound to us. All that might be raked out from the coarse print and the fine print of grammar was to be brought to bear on us; and the division that knew the most — the division that could not be puzzled by any subtlety, that had anticipated every possible question, and was prepared with an answer — would be the victorious division, and would be crowned with laurels as glorious in our eyes as those of the old Olympic games. For a week we talked, spoke, and dreamed of nothing but English grammar. Each division sat in solemn, mysterious conclave, afraid lest one of its mighty secrets of wisdom should possibly take wing and be plundered by some of the outlying scouts of another division.

We had for a subject Satan's address to the sun, in Milton, which in our private counsels we tore limb from limb with as little remorse as the anatomist dissects a once lovely human body.

The town doctor was a noted linguist and grammarian,

and his son was contended for by all the divisions, as supposed to have access to the fountain of his father's wisdom on these subjects; and we were so happy in the balloting as to secure him for our side. Esther was our leader, and we were all in the same division, and our excitement was indescribable. We had also to manage a quotation from Otway, which I remember contained the clause, "Were the world on fire." To parse "on fire" was a problem which kept the eyes of the whole school waking. Each division had its theory, of which it spoke mysteriously in the presence of outsiders; but we had George Norton, and George had been in solemn consultation with Dr. Norton. Never shall I forget the excitement as he came rushing up to our house at nine o'clock at night with the last results of his father's analysis. We shut the doors and shut the windows, — for who knew what of the enemy might be listening? — and gathered breathlessly around him, while in a low, mysterious voice he unfolded to us how to parse "on fire." At that moment George Norton enjoyed the full pleasure of being a distinguished individual, if he never did before or after.

Mr. Rossiter all this while was like the Egyptian Sphinx, perfectly unfathomable, and severely resolved to sift and test us to the utmost.

Ah, well! to think of the glories of the day when our division beat! — for we did beat. We ran along neck and neck with Ben Baldwin's division, for Ben was an accomplished grammarian, and had picked up one or two recondite pieces of information wherewith he threatened for a time to turn our flank, but the fortunes of the field were reversed when it came to the phrase "on fire," and our success was complete and glorious. It was well to have this conflict over, for I don't believe that Tina slept one night that week without dreams of particles and prepositions, — Tina, who was as full of the enthusiasm of everything that was going on as a

flossy evening cloud is of light, and to whose health I really do believe a defeat might have caused a serious injury.

Never shall I forget Esther, radiant, grave, and resolved, as she sat in the midst of her division through all the fluctuations of the contest. A little bright spot had come in each of her usually pale cheeks, and her eyes glowed with a fervor which showed that she had it in her to have defended a fortress, or served a cannon, like the Maid of Saragossa. We could not have felt more if our division had been our country and she had led us in triumph through a battle.

Besides grammar, we gave great attention to rhetoric. We studied Dr. Blair with the same kind of thoroughness with which we studied the English grammar. Every week a division of the school was appointed to write compositions; but there was, besides, a call for volunteers, and Mr. Rossiter had a smile of approbation for those who volunteered to write every week; and so we were always among that number.

It was remarkable that the very best writers, as a general thing, were among the female part of the school. There were several young men, of nineteen and twenty years of age, whose education had been retarded by the necessity of earning for themselves the money which was to support them while preparing for college. They were not boys, they were men, and, generally speaking, men of fine minds and fine characters. Some of them have since risen to distinction, and acted leading parts at Washington. But, for all that, the best writers of the school, as I have before said, were the girls. Nor was the standard of writing low: Mr. Rossiter had the most withering scorn for ordinary sentimental nonsense and schoolgirl platitudes. If a bit of weakly poetry got running among the scholars, he was sure to come down upon it with such an absurd parody that nobody could ever recall it again without a laugh.

We wrote on such subjects as "The Difference between the Natural and Moral Sublime," "The Comparative Merits of Milton and Shakespeare," "The Comparative Merits of the Athenian and Lacedæmonian Systems of Education." Sometimes, also, we wrote criticisms. If, perchance, the master picked up some verbose Fourth of July oration, or some sophomorical newspaper declamation, he delivered it over to our tender mercies with as little remorse as a huntsman feels in throwing a dead fox to the dogs. Hard was the fate of any such composition thrown out to us. With what infinite zeal we attacked it! how we riddled and shook it! how we scoffed, and sneered, and jeered at it! how we exposed its limping metaphors, and hung up in triumph its deficient grammar! Such a sharp set of critics we became that our compositions, read to each other, went through something of an ordeal.

Tina, Harry, Esther, and I were a private composition club. Many an hour have we sat in the old schoolroom long after all the other scholars had gone, talking to one another of our literary schemes. We planned poems and tragedies; we planned romances that would have taken many volumes to write out; we planned arguments and discussions; we gravely criticised each other's style, and read morsels of projected compositions to one another.

It was characteristic of the simple, earnest fearlessness of those times in regard to all matters of opinion, that the hardest theological problems were sometimes given out as composition subjects, and we four children not unfrequently sat perched on the old high benches of the schoolroom during the fading twilight hours, and, like Milton's fallen angels, —

> "Reasoned high
> Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute, . . .
> Of happiness and final misery."

Esther, Harry, and I were reading the "Prometheus

Bound" with Mr. Rossiter. It was one of his literary diversions, into which he carried us; and the Calvinism of the old Greek tragedian mingling with the Calvinism of the pulpit and of modern New England life formed a curious admixture in our thoughts.

Tina insisted on reading this with us, just as of old she insisted on being carried in a lady-chair over to our woodland study in the island. She had begun Greek with great zeal under Mr. Rossiter, but of course was in no situation to venture upon any such heights; but she insisted upon always being with us when we were digging out our lesson, and in fact, when we were talking over doubtfully the meaning of a passage, would irradiate it with such a flood of happy conjecture as ought to have softened the stern facts of moods and tenses, and *made* itself the meaning. She rendered some parts of it into verse much better than any of us could have done it, and her versifications, laid on Mr. Rossiter's desk, called out a commendation that was no small triumph to her.

"My forte lies in picking knowledge out of other folks and using it," said Tina joyously. "Out of the least bit of ore that you dig up, I can make no end of gold-leaf!" O Tina, Tina, you never spoke a truer word, and while you were with us you made everything glitter with your "no end of gold-leaf."

It may seem to some impossible that, at so early an age as ours, our minds should have striven with subjects such as have been indicated here; but let it be remembered that these problems are to every human individual a part of an unknown tragedy in which he is to play the rôle either of the conqueror or the victim. A ritualistic church, which places all souls under the guardianship of a priesthood, of course shuts all these doors of discussion so far as the individual is concerned. "The Church" is a great ship, where you have only to buy your ticket and pay for it, and the rest

is none of your concern. But the New England system, as taught at this time, put on every human being the necessity of crossing the shoreless ocean alone on his own raft; and many a New England child of ten or twelve years of age, or even younger, has trembled at the possibilities of final election or reprobation.

I remember well that at one time the composition subject given out at school was, "Can the Benevolence of the Deity be proved by the Light of Nature?" Mr. Rossiter generally gave out the subject, and discussed it with the school in an animated conversation, stirring up all the thinking matter that there was among us by vigorous questions, and by arguing before us first on one side and then on the other, until our minds were strongly excited about it; and, when he had wrought up the whole school to an intense interest, he called for volunteers to write on either side. Many of these compositions were full of vigor and thought; two of those on the above-mentioned subject were very striking. Harry took the affirmative ground, and gave a statement of the argument, so lucid, and in language so beautiful, that it has remained fixed in my mind like a gem ever since. It was the statement of a nature harmonious and confiding, naturally prone to faith in goodness, harmonizing and presenting all those evidences of tenderness, mercy, and thoughtful care which are furnished in the workings of natural laws. The other composition was by Esther; it was on the other and darker side of the subject, and as perfect a match for it as the "Penseroso" to the "Allegro." It was condensed and logical, fearfully vigorous in conception and expression, and altogether a very melancholy piece of literature to have been conceived and written by a girl of her age. It spoke of that fearful law of existence by which the sins of parents who often themselves escape punishment are visited on the heads of innocent children, as a law which seems made specifically to protect and continue the existence of vice

and disorder from generation to generation. It spoke of the apparent injustice of an arrangement by which human beings, in the very outset of their career in life, often inherit almost uncontrollable propensities to evil. The sorrows, the perplexities, the unregarded wants and aspirations, over which the unsympathetic laws of nature cut their way regardless of quivering nerve or muscle, were all bitterly dwelt upon. The sufferings of dumb animals, and of helpless infant children, apparently so useless and so needless, and certainly so undeserved, were also energetically mentioned. There was a bitter intensity in the style that was most painful. In short, the two compositions were two perfect pictures of the world and life as they appear to two classes of minds. I remember looking at Esther while her composition was read, and being struck with the expression of her face, — so pale, so calm, so almost hopeless, — its expression was very like despair. I remember that Harry noticed it as well as I, and when school was over he took a long and lonely ramble with her, and from that time a nearer intimacy arose between them.

Esther was one of those intense, silent, repressed women that have been a frequent outgrowth of New England society. Moral traits, like physical ones, often intensify themselves in course of descent, so that the child of a long line of pious ancestry may sometimes suffer from too fine a moral fibre, and become a victim to a species of morbid spiritual ideality. Esther looked to me, from the first, less like a warm, breathing, impulsive woman, less like ordinary flesh and blood, than some half-spiritual organization, every particle of which was a thought. Old Dr. Donne says of such a woman, "One might almost say her body thought;" and it often came in my mind when I watched the movements of intense yet repressed intellect and emotion in Esther's face.

With many New England women at this particular period, when life was so retired and so cut off from outward sources

of excitement, *thinking* grew to be a disease. The great subject of thought was, of course, theology; and woman's nature has never been consulted in theology. Theologic systems, as to the expression of their great body of ideas, have as yet been the work of man alone. They have had their origin, as in St. Augustine, with men who were utterly ignorant of moral and intellectual companionship with woman, looking on her only in her animal nature as a temptation and a snare. Consequently, when, as in this period of New England, the theology of Augustine began to be freely discussed by every individual in society, it was the women who found it hardest to tolerate or to assimilate it, and many a delicate and sensitive nature was utterly wrecked in the struggle.

Plato says somewhere that the only perfect human thinker and philosopher who will ever arise will be the MAN-WOMAN, or a human being who unites perfectly the nature of the two sexes. It was Esther's misfortune to have, to a certain degree, this very confirmation. From a long line of reasoning, thinking, intellectual ancestry she had inherited all the strong logical faculties, and the tastes and inclinations for purely intellectual modes of viewing things, which are supposed to be more particularly the characteristic of man. From a line of saintly and tender women, half-refined to angel in their nature, she had inherited exquisite moral perceptions, and all that flattering host of tremulous, half-spiritual, half-sensuous intuitions that lie in the borderland between the pure intellect and the animal nature. The consequence of all this was the internal strife of a divided nature. Her heart was always rebelling against the conclusions of her head. She was constantly being forced by one half of her nature to movements, inquiries, and reasonings which brought only torture to the other half. Esther had no capacity for illusions; and in this respect her constitution was an unfortunate one.

Tina, for example, was one of those happily organized human beings in whom an intellectual proposition, fully assented to, might lie all her life dormant as the wheat-seed which remained thousands of years ungerminate in the wrappings of a mummy. She thought only of what she liked to think of; and a disagreeable or painful truth in her mind dropped at once out of sight, — it sank into the ground and roses grew over it.

Esther never could have made one of those clinging, submissive, parasitical wives who form the delight of song and story, and are supposed to be the peculiar gems of womanhood. It was her nature always to be obliged to see her friends clearly through the understanding, and to judge them by a refined and exquisite conscientiousness. A spot or stain on the honor of the most beloved could never have become invisible to her. She had none of that soft, blinding, social aura, — that blending, blue haze, such as softens the sharp outlines of an Italian landscape, and in life changes the hardness of reality into illusive and charming possibilities. Her clear, piercing hazel eyes seemed to pass over everything with a determination to know only and exactly the truth, hard and cold and unwelcome though it might be.

Yet there is no doubt that the warm, sunny, showery, rainbow nature of Tina acted as a constant and favorable alterative upon her. It was a daily living poem acting on the unused poetical and imaginative part of her own nature; for Esther had a suppressed vigor of imagination, and a passionate capability of emotion, stronger and more intense than that of Tina herself.

I remarked this to Harry, as we were talking about them one day. "Both have poetical natures," I said; "both are intense; but how different they are!"

"Yes," said Harry, "Tina's is electricity, and that snaps and sparkles and flashes; Esther's is galvanism, that comes

in long, intense waves, and shakes and convulses; she both thinks and feels too much on all subjects."

"That was a very strange composition," I said.

"It is an unwholesome course of thought," said Harry, after thinking for a few moments with his head on his hands; "none but bitter berries grow on those bushes."

"But the reasoning was very striking," said I.

"Reasoning!" said Harry impatiently; "we must trust the intuition of our hearts above reason. That is what I am trying to persuade Esther to do. To me it is an absolute demonstration, that God never could make a creature who would be *better* than himself. We must look at the noblest, best human beings. We must see what generosity, what tenderness, what magnanimity can be in man and woman, and believe all that and more in God. All that there is in the best fathers and best mothers *must* be in him."

"But the world's history does not look like this, as Mr. Rossiter was saying."

"We have not seen the world's history yet," said Harry. "What does this green aphide, crawling over this leaf, know of the universe?"

CHAPTER XXXIV

OUR MINISTER IN CLOUDLAND

THE picture of our life in Cloudland, and of the developing forces which were there brought to bear upon us, would be incomplete without the portrait of the minister.

Even during the course of my youth, the principles of democratic equality introduced and maintained in the American Revolution were greatly changing the social position and standing of the clergy. Ministers like Dr. Lothrop, noble men of the theocracy, men of the cocked hat, were beginning to pass away, or to appear among men only as venerable antiquities, and the present order of American citizen clergy was coming in.

Mr. Avery was a cheerful, busy, manly man, who posed himself among men as a companion and fellow-citizen, whose word on any subject was to go only so far as its own weight and momentum should carry it. His preaching was a striking contrast to the elegant Addisonian essays of Parson Lothrop. It was a vehement address to our intelligent and reasoning powers, — an address made telling by a back force of burning enthusiasm. Mr. Avery preached a vigorous system of mental philosophy in theology, which made our Sundays, on the whole, about as intense an intellectual drill as any of our week-days. If I could describe its character by any one word I should call it *manly* preaching.

Every person has a keynote to his mind which determines all its various harmonies. The keynote of Mr. Avery's mind was "the free agency of man." Free agency was with him the universal solvent, the philosopher's stone

in theology; every line of his sermons said to every human being, "You are free, and you are able." And the great object was to intensify to its highest point, in every human being, the sense of individual, personal responsibility.

Of course, as a Calvinist, he found food for abundant discourse in reconciling this absolute freedom of man with those declarations in the standards of the Church which assert the absolute government of God over all his creatures and all their actions. But the cheerfulness and vigor with which he drove and interpreted and hammered in the most contradictory statements, when they came in the way of his favorite ideas, was really quite inspiring.

During the year we had a whole course of systematic theology, beginning with the history of the introduction of moral evil, the fall of the angels, and the consequent fall of man and the work of redemption resulting therefrom. In the treatment of all these subjects, the theology and imagery of Milton figured so largely that one might receive the impression that "Paradise Lost" was part of the sacred canon.

Mr. Avery not only preached these things in the pulpit, but talked them out in his daily life. His system of theology was to him the vital breath of his being. His mind was always running upon it, and all nature was, in his sight, giving daily tributary illustrations to it. In his farming, gardening, hunting, or fishing, he was constantly finding new and graphic forms of presenting his favorite truths. The most abstract subject ceased to be abstract in his treatment of it, but became clothed upon with the homely, every-day similes of common life.

I have the image of the dear good man now, as I have seen him, seated on a hay-cart, mending a hoe-handle, and at the same moment vehemently explaining to an inquiring brother minister the exact way that Satan first came to fall, as illustrating how a perfectly holy mind can be tempted to

sin. The familiarity that he showed with the celestial arcana, — the zeal with which he vindicated his Maker, — the perfect knowledge that he seemed to have of the strategic plans of the evil powers in the first great insurrection, — are traits strongly impressed on my memory. They seemed as vivid and as much a matter of course to his mind as if he had read them out of a weekly newspaper.

Mr. Avery indulged the fond supposition that he had solved the great problem of the origin of evil in a perfectly satisfactory manner. He was fond of the Socratic method, and would clench his reasoning in a series of questions, thus:

"Has not God power to make any kind of thing he pleases?"

"Yes."

"Then he can make a kind of being incapable of being governed except by motive?"

"Yes."

"Then, when he has made that kind of being, he cannot govern them except by motive, can he?"

"No."

"Now if there is no motive in existence strong enough to govern them by, he cannot keep them from falling, can he?"

"No."

"You see, then, the necessity of moral evil: there must be experience of evil to work out motive."

The Calvinism of Mr. Avery, though sharp and well defined, was not dull, as abstractions often are, nor gloomy and fateful like that of Dr. Stern. It was permeated through and through by cheerfulness and hope.

Mr. Avery was one of the kind of men who have a passion for saving souls. If there is such a thing as apostolic succession, this passion is what it ought to consist in. It is what ought to come with the laying on of hands, if the laying on of hands is what it is sometimes claimed to be.

Mr. Avery was a firm believer in hell, but he believed also that nobody need go there, and he was determined, so far as he was concerned, that nobody should go there if he could help it. Such a tragedy as the loss of any one soul in his parish he could not and would not contemplate for a moment; and he had such a firm belief in the truths he preached, that he verily expected with them to save anybody that would listen to him.

Goethe says, "Blessed is the man who believes that he has an idea by which he may help his fellow-creatures." Mr. Avery was exactly that man. He had such faith in what he preached that he would have gone with it to Satan himself, could he have secured a dispassionate and unemployed hour, with a hope of bringing him round.

Generous and ardent in his social sympathies, Mr. Avery never could be brought to believe that any particular human being had finally perished. At every funeral he attended he contrived to see a ground for hope that the departed had found mercy. Even the slightest hints of repentance were magnified in his warm and hopeful mode of presentation. He has been known to suggest to a distracted mother, whose thoughtless boy had been suddenly killed by a fall from a horse, the possibilities of the merciful old couplet, —

> "Between the saddle and the ground,
> Mercy was sought, and mercy found."

Like most of the New England ministers, Mr. Avery was a warm believer in the millennium. This millennium was the favorite recreation ground, solace, and pasture-land, where the New England ministry fed their hopes and courage. Men of large hearts and warm benevolence, their theology would have filled them with gloom, were it not for this overplus of joy and peace to which human society on earth was in their view tending. Thousands of years, when the poor old earth should produce only a saintly race of perfected human beings, were to them some compensation for the darkness and losses of the great struggle.

Mr. Avery believed, not only that the millennium was coming, but that it was coming fast, and, in fact, was at the door. Every political and social change announced it. Our Revolution was a long step towards it, and the French Revolution, now in progress, was a part of that distress of nations which heralded it; and every month, when the "Columbia Magazine" brought in the news from Europe, Mr. Avery rushed over to Mr. Rossiter, and called him to come and hear how the thing was going.

Mr. Rossiter took upon himself that right which every free-born Yankee holds sacred, — the right of contravening his minister. Though, if he caught one of his boys swelling or ruffling with any opposing doctrine, he would scathe and scorch the youngster with contemptuous irony, and teach him to comport himself modestly in talking of his betters, yet it was the employment of a great many of his leisure hours to run argumentative tilts against Mr. Avery. Sometimes when we were sitting in our little garret window digging out the Greek lessons, such a war of voices and clangor of assertion and contradiction would come up from among the tassels of the corn, where the two were hoeing together in the garden, as would have alarmed people less accustomed to the vigorous manners of both the friends.

"Now, Rossiter, that will never do. Your system would upset moral government entirely. Not an angel could be kept in his place upon your supposition."

"It is not my supposition. I have n't got any supposition, and I don't want any; but I was telling you that, if you must have a theory of the universe, Origen's was a better one than yours."

"And I say that Origen's system would upset everything, and you ought to let it alone."

"I sha'n't let it alone!"

"Why, Rossiter, you will destroy responsibility, and annihilate all the motives of God's government."

"That's just what you theologians always say. You think the universe will go to pieces if we upset your pine-shingle theology."

"Rossiter, you must be careful how you spread your ideas."

"I don't want to spread my ideas; I don't want to interfere with your system. It's the best thing you can make your people take, but you ought to know that no system is anything more than human theory."

"It's eternal truth."

"There's truth in it, but it isn't eternal truth."

"It's Bible."

"Part, and part Milton and Edwards, and part Mr. Avery."

Harry and I were like adopted sons in both families, and the two expressed their minds about each other freely before us. Mr. Avery would say: "The root of the matter is in Rossiter. I don't doubt that he's a really regenerate man, but he has a head that works strangely. We must wait for him; he'll come along by and by."

And Mr. Rossiter would say of Mr. Avery: "That's a growing man, boys; he hasn't made his terminal buds yet. Some men make them quick, like lilac bushes. They only grow a little way and stop. And some grow all the season through, like locust-trees. Avery is one of that sort: he'll never be done thinking and growing, particularly if he has me to fight him on all hands. He'll grow into different opinions on a good many subjects before he dies."

It was this implied liberty of growth — the liberty to think and to judge freely upon all subjects — that formed the great distinctive educational force of New England life, particularly in this period of my youth. Monarchy, aristocracy, and theocracy, with their peculiar trains of ideas, were passing away, and we were coming within the sweep of pure republican influences, in which the individual is everything.

Mr. Avery's enthusiastic preaching of free agency and personal responsibility was more than an individual impulse. It was the voice of a man whose ideas were the reflection of a period in American history. While New England theology was made by loyal monarchists, it reflected monarchical ideas. The rights and immunities of divine sovereignty were its favorite topics. When, as now, the government was becoming settled in the hands of the common people, the freedom of the individual, his absolute power of choice, and the consequent reasonableness of the duties he owed to the Great Sovereign Authority began to be the favorite subjects of the pulpit.

Mr. Avery's preaching was immensely popular. There were in Cloudland only about half a dozen families of any prestige as to ancestral standing or previous wealth and cultivation. The old aristocratic idea was represented only in the one street that went over Cloudland Hill, where was a series of wide, cool, roomy, elm-shadowed houses, set back in deep dooryards, and flanked with stately, well-tended gardens. The doctor, the lawyer, the sheriff of the county, the schoolmaster, and the minister, formed here a sort of nucleus; but outlying in all the hills and valleys round were the mountain and valley farmers. Their houses sat on high hills or sunk in deep valleys, and their flaming windows at morning and evening looked through the encircling belts of forest solitudes as if to say, "We are here, and we are a power." These hard-working farmers formed the body of Mr. Avery's congregation. Sunday morning, when the little bell pealed out its note of invitation loud and long over the forest-feathered hills, it seemed to evoke a caravan of thrifty, well-filled farm wagons, which, punctual as the village clock itself, came streaming from the east and west, the north and south. Past the parsonage they streamed, with the bright cheeks and fluttering ribbons of the girls, and the cheery, rubicund faces of children, and with the inevi-

table yellow dog of the family faithfully pattering in the rear. The audience that filled the rude old meeting-house every Sunday would have astonished the men who only rode through the village of a week-day. For this set of shrewd, toil-hardened, vigorous, full-blooded republicans I can think of no preaching more admirably adapted than Mr. Avery's. It was preaching that was on the move, as their minds were, and which was slowly shaping out and elaborating those new forms of doctrinal statement that inevitably grow out of new forms of society. Living, as these men did, a lonely, thoughtful, secluded life, without any of the thousand stimulants which railroads and magazine and newspaper literature cast into our existence, their two Sunday sermons were the great intellectual stimulus which kept their minds bright, and they were listened to with an intense interest of which the scattered and diversified state of modern society gives few examples. They felt the compliment of being talked to as if they were capable of understanding the very highest of subjects, and they liked it. Each hard, heroic nature flashed like a flint at the grand thought of a free agency with which not even their Maker would interfere. Their God himself asked to reign over them, not by force, but by the free, voluntary choice of their own hearts. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve. If the Lord be God, serve him, and if Baal be God, serve him," was a grand appeal, fit for freemen.

The reasoning on moral government, on the history of man, — the theories of the universe past, present, and to come, — opened to these men a grand Miltonic poem, in which their own otherwise commonplace lives shone with a solemn splendor. Without churches or cathedrals or physical accessories to quicken their poetic nature, their lives were redeemed only by this poetry of ideas.

Calvinism is much berated in our days, but let us look at the political, social, and materialistic progress of Calvin-

istic countries, and ask if the world is yet far enough along to dispense with it altogether. Look at Spain at this hour, and look back at New England at the time of which I write, — both having just finished a revolution, both feeling their way along the path of national independence, — and compare the Spanish peasantry with the yeomen of New England, such as made up Mr. Avery's congregation ; — the one set made by reasoning, active-minded Calvinism, the other by pictures, statues, incense, architecture, and all the sentimental paraphernalia of ritualism.

If Spain had had not a single cathedral, if her Murillos had been all sunk in the sea, and if she had had, for a hundred years past, a set of schoolmasters and ministers working together as I have described Mr. Avery and Mr. Rossiter as working, would not Spain be infinitely better off for this life at least, whether there is any life to come or not ? This is a point that I humbly present to the consideration of society.

Harry and I were often taken by Mr. Avery on his preaching tours to the distant farm parishes. There was a brown schoolhouse in this valley, and a red schoolhouse in that, and another on the hill, and so on for miles around, and Mr. Avery kept a constant stream of preaching going in one or other of these every evening. We liked these expeditions with him, because they were often excursions amid the wildest and most romantic of the mountain scenery, and we liked them furthermore because Mr. Avery was a man that made himself, for the time being, companionable to ever creature of human shape that was with him.

With boys he was a boy, — a boy in the vigor of his animal life, his keen delight in riding, hunting, fishing. With farmers he was a farmer. Brought up on a farm, familiar during all his early days with its wholesome toils, he still had a farmer's eye and a farmer's estimates, and the working people felt him bone of their bone, and flesh of

their flesh. It used to be a saying among them, that when Mr. Avery hoed more than usual in his potato-field, the Sunday sermon was sure to be better.

But the best sport of all was when some of Mr. Avery's preaching tours would lead up the course of a fine mountain trout brook in the vicinity. Then sometimes Mr. Rossiter, Mr. Avery, Harry, and I would put our supper in our pockets, and start with the sun an hour or two high, designing to bring up at the red schoolhouse, as the weekly notice phrased it, at "early candle-lighting."

A person who should accidentally meet Mr. Avery on one of these tours, never having seen him before, might imagine him to be a man who had never thought or dreamed of anything but catching trout all his days, he went into it with such abandon. Eye, voice, hand, thought, feeling, all were concentrated on trout. He seemed to have the quick perception, the rapid hand, and the noiseless foot of an Indian, and the fish came to his hook as if drawn there by magic. So perfectly absorbed was he that we would be obliged to jog his memory, and, in fact, often to drag him away by main force, when the hour for the evening lecture arrived. Then our spoils would be hid away among the bushes, and with wet feet he would hurry in; but, once in, he was as completely absorbed in his work of saving sinners as he had before been in his temporal fishery. He argued, illustrated, stated, guarded, answered objections, looking the while from one hard, keen, shrewd face to another, to see if he was being understood. The phase of Calvinism shown in my grandmother's blue book had naturally enough sowed through the minds of a thoughtful community hosts of doubts and queries. A great part of Mr. Avery's work was to remove these doubts by substituting more rational statements. It was essential that he should feel that he had made a hit somewhere, said something that answered a purpose in the minds of his hearers, and helped them at least a step or two on their way.

After services were over, I think of him and Mr. Rossiter cheerily arguing with and contradicting each other a little beyond us in the road, while Harry and I compared our own notes behind. Arrived at the parsonage, there would be Tina and Esther coming along the street to meet us, — Tina full of careless, open, gay enthusiasm, Esther with a shy and wistful welcome, that said far less, and perhaps meant more. Then our treasures were displayed and exulted over; the supper-table was laid, and Mr. Avery, Mr. Rossiter, and we boys applied ourselves to dressing our fish; and then Mr. Avery, disdaining Dinah, and, in fact, all female supervision, presided himself over the frying-pan, and brought our woodland captives on the table in a state worthy of a trout brook. It should have comforted the very soul of a trout taken in our snares to think how much was made of him, and how perfectly Mr. Avery respected his dignity, and did him justice in his cookery.

We two boys were in fact domesticated as sons in the family. Although our boarding-place was with the master, we were almost as much with the minister as if we had been of his household. We worked in his garden, we came over and sat with Esther and Tina. Our windows faced their windows, so that in study hours we could call to one another backward and forward, and tell where the lesson began, and what the root of the verb was, or any other message that came into our heads. Sometimes, of a still summer morning, while we were gravely digging at our lessons, we would hear Esther in tones of expostulation at some madcap impulse of Tina, and, looking across, would see her bursting out in some freak of droll pantomimic performance, and then an immediate whirlwind of gayety would seize us all. We would drop our dictionaries and grammars, rush together, and have a general outbreak of jollity.

In general, Tina was a most praiseworthy and zealous student, and these wild, sudden whisks of gayety seemed only the escape-valves by which her suppressed spirits vented themselves; but, when they came, they were perfectly irresistible. She devoted herself to Esther with that sympathetic adaptation which seemed to give her power over every nature. She was interested in her housekeeping, in all its departments, as if it had been her own glory and pride; and Tina was one that took glory and pride in everything of her friends, as if it had been her own. Esther had been left by the death of her mother only the year before the mistress of the parsonage. The great unspoken sorrow of this loss lay like a dark chasm between her and her father, each striving to hide from the other its depth and coldness by a brave cheerfulness.

Esther, strong as was her intellectual life, had that intense sense of the worth of a well-ordered household, and of the dignity of house economies, which is characteristic of New England women. Her conscientiousness pervaded every nook and corner of her domestic duties with a beautiful perfection; nor did she ever feel tempted to think that her fine mental powers were a reason why these homely details should be considered a slavery. Household cares are a drudgery only when unpervaded by sentiment. When they are an offering of love, a ministry of care and devotion to the beloved, every detail has its interest.

There were certain grand festivals of a minister's family which fill a housekeeper's heart and hands, and in which all of us made common interest with her. The Association was a reunion when all the ministers of the county met together and spent a social day with the minister, dining together, and passing their time in brotherly converse, such as reading essays, comparing sermons, taking counsel with each other in all the varied ups and downs of their pastoral life. The Consociation was another meeting of the clergy,

but embracing also with each minister a lay delegate, and thus uniting, not only the ministry, but the laymen of the county, in a general fraternal religious conference.

The first Association that Esther had to manage quite alone as sole mistress of the parsonage occurred while we were with her. Like most solemn festivals of New England, these seasons were announced under the domestic roof by great preparatory poundings and choppings, by manufacture, on a large scale, of cakes, pies, and provisions for the outer man; and at this time Harry, Tina, and I devoted all our energies, and made ourselves everywhere serviceable. We ran to the store on errands, we chopped mince for pies with a most virtuous pertinacity, we cut citron and stoned raisins, we helped put up curtains and set up bedsteads. We were all of us as resolved as Esther that the housekeeping of the little parsonage should be found without speck or flaw, and should reflect glory upon her youthful sovereignty.

Some power or other gilded and glorified these happy days, — for happy enough they were. What was it that made everything that we four did together so harmonious and so charming? "Friendship, only friendship," sang Tina, with silver tongue. "Such a *perfect* friendship," she remarked, "was *never* known except just in our particular case;" it exceeded all the classical records, all the annals, ancient and modern.

But what instinct or affinity in friendship made it a fact that when we four sat at table together, with our lessons before us, Harry somehow was always found on Esther's side? I used to notice it because his golden-brown mat of curls was such a contrast to the smooth, shining black satin bands of her hair as they bent together over the dictionary, and looked up innocently into each other's eyes, talking of verbs and adjectives and terminations, innocently conjugating "amo, amare" to each other. Was it friendship

that made Esther's dark, clear eyes instinctively look towards Harry for his opinion, when we were reading our compositions to one another? Was it friendship, that starry brightness that began to come in Harry's eyes, and made them seem darker and bluer and deeper, with a sort of mysterious meaning, when he looked at Esther? Was it friendship that seemed to make him feel taller, stronger, more manly, when he thought of her, and that always placed him at her hand when there was some household task that required a manly height or handiness? It was Harry and Esther together who put up the white curtains all through the parsonage that spring, that made it look so trim and comely for the ministers' meeting. Last year, Esther said, innocently, she had no one to help her, and the work tired her so. How happy, how busy, how bright they were as they measured and altered, and Harry, in boundless complacency, went up and down at her orders, and changed and altered and arranged, till her fastidious eye was satisfied and every fold hung aright! It was Harry who took down and cleansed the family portraits, and hung them again, and balanced them so nicely; it was Harry who papered over a room where the walls had been disfigured by an accident, and it was Esther by him who cut the paper and trimmed the bordering and executed all her little sovereignties of taste and disposal by his obedient hands. And Tina and I at this time gathered green boughs and ground-pine for the vases, and made floral decorations without end, till the bare little parsonage looked like a woodland bower.

I have pleasant recollections of those ministers' meetings. Calvinistic doctrines, in their dry, abstract form, are, I confess, rather hard; but Calvinistic ministers, so far as I have ever had an opportunity to observe, are invariably a jolly set of fellows. In those early days the ministry had not yet felt the need of that generous decision which

led them afterwards to forego all dangerous stimulants, as an example to their flock. A long green wooden case, full of tobacco-pipes and a quantity of papers of tobacco, used to be part of the hospitable stock prepared for the reception of the brethren. No less was there a quantity of spirituous liquor laid in. In those days its dispensation was regarded as one of the inevitable duties of hospitality. The New England ministry of this period were men full of interest. Each one was the intellectual centre of his own district, and supplied around him the stimulus which is now brought to bear through a thousand other sources. It was the minister who overlooked the school, who put parents upon the idea of giving their sons liberal educations. In poor districts the minister often practiced medicine, and drew wills and deeds, thus supplying the place of both lawyer and doctor. Apart from their doctrinal theology, which was a constant source of intellectual activity to them, their secluded life led them to many forms of literary labor.

As a specimen of these, it is recorded of the Rev. Mr. Taylor, of Westfield, that he took such delight in the writings of Origen, that, being unable to purchase them, he copied them in four quarto volumes, that he might have them for his own study. These are still in the possession of his descendants. Other instances of literary perseverance and devotion, equally curious, might be cited.

The lives that these men led were simple and tranquil. Almost all of them were practical farmers, preserving about them the fresh sympathies and interests of the soil, and laboring enough with their hands to keep their muscles in good order and prevent indigestion. Mingling very little with the world, each one a sort of autocrat in his way, in his own district, and with an idea of stability and perpetuity in his office, which, in these days, does not belong to the position of a minister anywhere, these men developed

many originalities and peculiarities of character, to which the simple state of society then allowed full scope. They were humorists, — like the mossy old apple-trees which each of them had in his orchard, bending this way and turning that, and throwing out their limbs with quaint twists and jerks, yet none the less acceptable, so long as the fruit they bore was sound and wholesome.

We have read of "Handkerchief Moody," who for some years persisted in always appearing among men with his face covered with a handkerchief, — an incident which Hawthorne has worked up in his weird manner into the story of "The Minister with the Black Veil."

Father Mills, of Torringford, was a gigantic man who used to appear in the pulpit in a full-bottomed white horse-hair wig. On the loss of a beloved wife, he laid aside his wig for a year, and appeared in the pulpit with his head tied up in a black handkerchief, representing to the good housewives of his parish that, as he always dressed in black, he could in no other way testify to his respect for his dear wife's memory; and this tribute was accepted by his parish with the same innocent simplicity with which it was rendered.

On the whole, the days which brought all the brother ministers to the parsonage were days of enlivenment to all us young people. They seemed to have such a hearty joy in their meeting, and to deliver themselves up to mirth and good-fellowship with such a free and hearty abandon, and the jokes and stories which they brought with them were chorused by such roars of merriment, as made us think a ministers' meeting the most joyous thing on earth.

I know that some say this jocund mirthfulness indicated a want of faith in the doctrines they taught. But do not you and I, honest friends, often profess our belief in things which it would take away our appetite and wither our

strength to realize, but notwithstanding which we eat and drink and sleep joyously? You read in your morning paper that the city of so-and-so has been half submerged by an earthquake, and that after the earthquake came a fire and burnt the crushed inhabitants alive in the ruins of their dwellings. Nay, if you are an American, you may believe some such catastrophe to have happened on the Erie Railroad a day or two before, and that men, women, and children have been cooped up and burnt, in lingering agonies, in your own vicinity. And yet, though you believe these things, you laugh and talk and are gay, and plan for a party in the evening and a ride on the same road the next week.

No; man was mercifully made with the power of ignoring what he believes. It is all that makes existence in a life like this tolerable. And our ministers, conscious of doing the very best they can to keep the world straight, must be allowed their laugh and joke, sin and Satan to the contrary notwithstanding.

There was only one brother, in the whole confraternity that used to meet at Mr. Avery's, who was not a married man; and he, in spite of all the snares and temptations which must beset a minister who guides a female flock of parishioners, had come to the afternoon of life in the state of bachelorhood. But oh, the jokes and witticisms which always set the room in a roar at his expense! It was a subject that never wearied or grew old. To clap Brother Boardman on the back and inquire for Mrs. Boardman, — to joke him about some suitable widow or bright-eyed young lamb of his flock, at each ministers' meeting, — was a provocative of mirth ever fresh and ever young. But the undaunted old bachelor was always a match for these attacks, and had his rejoinder ready to fling back into the camp of the married men. He was a model of gallant devotion to womanhood in the abstract, and seemed loath

to give up to one what was meant for womankind. So, the last that I ever heard of him, he was still unmarried, — a most unheard-of thing for a New England parson.

Mr. Avery was a leader among the clergy of his State. His zeal, enthusiasm, eloquence, and doctrinal vigor, added to a capacity for forming an indefinite number of personal friendships, made him a sort of chief among them.

What joyous hours they spent together in the ins and the outs, the highways and byways, of metaphysics and theology! Harry and Esther and Tina and I learned them all. We knew all about the Arminians and Pelagians and the Tasters and the Exercisers, and made a deal of fun with each other over them in our private hours. We knew precisely every shade of difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee which the different metaphysicians had invented, and tossed our knowledge joyously back and forward at one another in our gayer hours, just as the old ministers did, when they smoked and argued in the great parsonage dining-room. Everything is joyful that is learned by two young men in company with two young women with whom they are secretly in love. Mathematics, metaphysics, or no matter what of dry and desolate, buds and blossoms as the rose under such circumstances.

Did you ever go out in the misty gray of morning dawn, when the stars had not yet shut their eyes, and still there were rosy bands lying across the east? And then have you watched a trellis of morning-glories, with all the buds asleep, but ready in one hour to waken? The first kiss of sunlight and they will be open! That was just where we were.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION

No New England boy or girl comes to maturity without a full understanding of what is meant by the term at the head of this chapter.

Religion was, perhaps, never so much the governing idea in any commonwealth before. Nowhere has there been a people, the mass of whom acted more uniformly on considerations drawn from the unseen and future life; yet nowhere a people who paid a more earnest attention to the life that is seen and temporal. The New England colonies were, in the first instance, the outgrowth of a religious enthusiasm. Right alongside of them, at the same period of time, other colonies were founded from a religious enthusiasm quite as intense and sincere. The French missionary settlers in Canada had a grandeur of self-sacrifice, an intensity of religious devotion, which would almost throw in the shade that of the Pilgrim Fathers; and the sole reason why one set of colonists proved the seed of a great nation, and the other attained so very limited success, is the difference between the religions taught by the two.

The one was the religion of asceticism, in view of which contempt of the body and of material good was taught as a virtue, and its teachers were men and women to whom marriage and its earthly relations were forbidden. The other was the spirit of the Old Testament, in which material prosperity is always spoken of as the lawful reward of piety, in which marriage is an honor, and a numerous posterity a thing to be desired. Our forefathers were, in many essen-

tial respects, Jews in their thoughts and feelings with regard to this life, but they superadded to this broad physical basis the intense spiritualism of the New Testament. Hence came a peculiar race of men, uniting the utmost extremes of the material and the spiritual.

Dr. Franklin represents that outgrowth of the New England mind which moves in the material alone, and scarcely ever rises to the spiritual. President Edwards represents the mind so risen to the spiritual as scarcely to touch the material. Put these two together, and you have the average New England character, — that land in which every *ism* of social or religious life has had its origin, — that land whose hills and valleys are one blaze and buzz of material and manufacturing production.

A revival of religion in New England meant a time when that deep spiritual undercurrent of thought and emotion with regard to the future life, which was always flowing quietly under its intense material industries, exhaled and steamed up into an atmosphere which pervaded all things, and made itself for a few weeks the only thought of every person in some town or village or city. It was the always-existing spiritual becoming visible and tangible.

Such periods would come in the labors of ministers like Mr. Avery. When a man of powerful mind and shrewd tact and great natural eloquence lives among a people already thoughtfully predisposed, for no other purpose than to stir them up to the care of their souls, it is evident that there will come times when the results of all his care and seeking, his public ministrations, his private conversations with individuals, will come out in some marked social form; and such a period in New England is called a revival of religion.

There were three or four weeks in the autumn of the first year that we spent in Cloudland, in which there was pervading the town a sort of subdued hush of emotions, —

a quiet sense of something like a spiritual presence brooding through the mild autumn air. This was accompanied by a general inclination to attend religious services and to converse on religious subjects. It pervaded the school; it was to be heard at the store. Every kind of individual talked on and about religion in his own characteristic way, and in a small mountain town like Cloudland everybody's characteristic way is known to every one else.

Ezekiel Scranton, the atheist of the parish, haunted the store where the farmers tied up their wagons when they brought their produce, and held, after his way, excited theological arguments with Deacon Phineas Simons, who kept the store, — arguments to which the academy boys sometimes listened, and of which they brought astounding reports to the schoolroom.

Tina, who was so intensely sympathetic with all social influences that she scarcely seemed to have an individuality of her own, was now glowing like a luminous cloud with religious zeal.

"I could convert that man," she said; "I know I could! I wonder Mr. Avery has n't converted him long ago!"

At this time, Mr. Avery, who had always kept a watchful eye upon us, had a special conversation with Harry and myself, the object of which was to place us right in our great foundation relations. Mr. Avery stood upon the basis that most good New England men, since Jonathan Edwards, have adopted, and regarded all young people, as a matter of course, out of the fold of the Church, and devoid of anything truly acceptable to God, until they had passed through a mental process designated, in well-known language, as conviction and conversion.

He began to address Harry, therefore, upon this supposition. I well remember the conversation.

"My son," he said, "is it not time for you to think seriously of giving your heart to God?"

"I have given my heart to God," replied Harry calmly.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Avery, with surprise; "when did that take place?"

"I have always done it."

Mr. Avery looked at him with a gentle surprise.

"Do you mean to say, my son, that you have always loved God?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry quietly.

Mr. Avery felt entirely incredulous, and supposed that this must be one of those specious forms of natural piety spoken of depreciatingly by Jonathan Edwards, who relates in his own memoirs similar exercises of early devotion as the mere fruits of the ungrafted natural heart. Mr. Avery, therefore, proceeded to put many theological questions to Harry on the nature of sin and holiness, on the difference between manly, natural affections and emotions, and those excited by the supernatural movement of a divine power on the soul, — the good man begging him to remember the danger of self-deception, saying that nothing was more common than for young people to mistake the transient movements of mere natural emotions for real religion.

I observed, that Harry, after a few moments, became violently agitated. Two large blue veins upon his forehead swelled out, his eyes had that peculiar flash and fire that they had at rare intervals, when some thought penetrated through the usual gentle quietude of his surface life to its deepest internal recesses. He rose and walked up and down the room, and finally spoke in a thick, husky voice, as one who pants with emotion. He was one of the most reserved human beings I have ever known. There was a region of emotion deep within him, which it was almost like death to him to express. There is something piteous and even fearful in the convulsions by which such natures disclose what is nearest to their hearts.

"Mr. Avery," he said, "I have heard your preaching

ever since I have been here, and thought of it all. It has done me good, because it has made me think deeply. It is right and proper that our minds should be forced to think on all these subjects; but I have not thought, and cannot think, exactly like you, nor exactly like any one that I know of. I must make up my opinions for myself. I suppose I am peculiar, but I have been brought up peculiarly. My lot in life has been very different from that of ordinary boys. The first ten years of my life, all that I can remember is the constant fear and pain and distress and mortification and want through which my mother and I passed together, — she a stranger in this strange land, — her husband and my father worse than nothing to us, oftentimes our greatest terror. We should both of us have died, if it had not been for one thing: she believed that her Saviour loved her, and loved us all. She told me that these sorrows were from him, — that he permitted them because he loved us, — that they would be for good in the end. She died at last alone and utterly forsaken by everybody but her Saviour, and yet her death was blessed. I saw it in her eyes, and she left it as her last message to me, whatever happened to me, *never to doubt God's love*, — in all my life to trust him, to seek his counsel in all things, and to believe that all that happened to me was ordered by him. This was and is my religion; and, after all that I have heard, I can have no other. I do love God because he is good, and because he has been good to me. I believe that Jesus Christ is God, and I worship God always through him, and I leave everything for myself, for life and death, in his hands. I know that I am not very good. I know, as you say, I am liable to make mistakes, and to deceive myself in a thousand ways; but he knows all things, and he can and will teach me; he will not let me lose myself, I feel sure."

"My son," said Mr. Avery, "you are blessed. I thank

God with all my heart for you. Go on, and God be with you!"

It is to be seen that Mr. Avery was a man who always corrected theory by common sense. When he perceived that a child could be trained up a Christian, and grow into the love of a Heavenly Father as he grows into the love of an earthly one, by a daily and hourly experience of goodness, he yielded to the perceptions of his mind in that particular case.

Of course our little circle of four had, at this time, deep communings. Tina was buoyant and joyous, full of poetic images, delighted with the news of every conversion, and taking such an interest in Mr. Avery's preaching that she several times suggested to him capital subjects for sermons. She walked up to Ezekiel Scranton's, one afternoon, for no other object than to convert him from his atheism, and succeeded so far as to exact a promise from him that he would attend all Mr. Avery's meetings for a fortnight. Ezekiel was one of the converts of that revival, and Harry and I of course ascribed it largely to Tina's influence.

A rough old New England farmer, living on the windy side of a high hill, subsisting largely on codfish and hard cider, does not often win the flattering attention of any little specimen of humanity like Tina; and therefore it was not to be wondered at, that the results of her missionary zeal appeared to his mind something like that recorded in the New Testament, where "an angel went down at a certain season and troubled the waters."

But while Tina was thus buoyant and joyous, Esther seemed to sink into the very depths of despondency. Hers, as I have already intimated, was one of those delicate and sensitive natures, on which the moral excitements of New England acted all the while with too much power. The work and care of a faithful pastor are always complicated by the fact that those truths, and modes of presenting

truths, which are only just sufficient to arouse the attention of certain classes of hearers, and to prevent their sinking into apathetic materialism, are altogether too stimulating and exciting for others of a more delicate structure.

Esther Avery was one of those persons for whom the peculiar theory of religious training which prevailed in New England at this period, however invigorating to the intellect of the masses, might be considered as a personal misfortune. Had she been educated in the tender and paternal manner recommended by the Cambridge platform, and practiced among the earlier Puritans, recognized from infancy as a member of Christ's Church, and in tender covenant relations with him, her whole being would have responded to such an appeal; her strongest leading faculties would have engaged her to fulfill, in the most perfect manner, the sacred duties growing out of that relation, and her course into the full communion of the Church would have been gentle and insensible as a flowing river.

"'T is a tyranny," says old Dr. Cotton Mather, "to impose upon every man a record of the precise time and way of their conversion to God. Few that have been restrained by a religious education can give such an one."

Esther, however, had been trained to expect a marked and decided period of conversion, — a change that could be described in the same language in which Paul described the conversion of the heathen at dissolute Corinth and Ephesus. She was told, as early as she was capable of understanding language, that she was by nature in a state of alienation from God, in which every thought of her heart and action of her life was evil, and evil only; and continually that she was entirely destitute of holiness and exposed momently to the wrath of God; and that it was her immediate duty to escape from this state by an act of penitence for sin and supreme love to God.

The effort to bring about in her heart that state of emotion

was during all her youth a failure. She was by constitution delicately, intensely self-analytic, and her analysis was guided by the most exacting moral ideality. Every hopeful emotion of her higher nature, as it rose, was dissolved in this keen analysis, as diamond and pearls disappeared in the smelting furnaces of the old alchemists. We all know that self-scrutiny is the death of emotion, and that the analytic, self-inspective habit is its sure preventive. Had Esther applied to her feelings for her own beloved father the same tests by which she tried every rising emotion of love to the Divine Being, the result would have been precisely the same.

Esther was now nineteen years of age; she was the idol of her father's heart; she was the staff and stay of her family; she was, in all the duties of life, inspired by a most faultless conscientiousness. Her love of the absolute right was almost painful in its excess of minuteness, and yet, in her own view, in the view of the Church, in the view even of her admiring and loving father, she was no Christian. Perfectly faultless in every relation so far as human beings could observe, reverent to God, submissive to his will, careful in all outward religious observances, yet wanting in a certain emotional experience, she judged herself to be, and was judged to be by the theology which her father taught, utterly devoid of virtue or moral excellence of any kind in the sight of God. The theology of the times also taught her that the act of grace which should put an end to this state, and place her in the relation of a forgiven child with her Heavenly Father, was a voluntary one, momently in her power, and that nothing but her own persistent refusal prevented her performing it; yet taught at the same time that, so desperate was the obstinacy of the human heart, no child of Adam ever would, or ever could, perform it without a special interposition of God, — an interposition which might or might not come. Thus all the responsibility and

the guilt rested upon her. Now, when a nature intensely conscientious is constantly oppressed by a sense of unperformed duty, that sense becomes a gnawing worm at the very root of life. Esther had in vain striven to bring herself into the required state of emotion. Often for weeks and months she offered daily, and many times a day, prayers which brought no brightness and no relief, and read conscientiously that Bible, all whose tender words and comforting promises were like the distant vision of Eden to the fallen exiles, guarded by a flaming sword which turned every way. Mute and mournful she looked into the paradise of peace possessed by the favored ones whom God had chosen to help through the mysterious passage, and asked herself, would that helping hand ever open the gate to her?

Esther had passed through two or three periods of revival of religion, and seen others far less consistent gathered into the fold of the Church, while she only sunk at each period into a state of hopeless gloom and despondency which threatened her health. Latterly, her mind, wounded and bruised, had begun to turn in bitter reactions. From such experiences as hers come floods of distracting intellectual questions. Skepticism and doubt are the direct children of unhappiness. If she had been, as her standards stated, born "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil," was not this an excuse for sin? Was it *her* fault that she was born so? and, if her Creator had brought her into being in this state, was it not an act of simple justice to restore her mind to a normal condition?

When she addressed these questions to her father, he was alarmed, and warned her against speculation. Mr. Avery did not consider that the Assembly's catechism and the Cambridge platform and a great part of his own preaching were, after all, but human speculation, — the uninspired *inferences* of men from the Bible, and not the Bible itself,

— and that minds once set going in this direction often cannot help a third question after a second, any more than they can help breathing; and that third question may be one for which neither God nor nature has an answer. Such inquiries as Esther's never arose from reading the parables of Christ, the Sermon on the Mount: they are the legitimate children of mere human attempts at systematic theology.

How to deliver a soul that has come from excessive harassments, introspections, self-analysis, into that morbid state of half-skeptical despondency, was a problem over which Mr. Avery sighed in vain. His cheerful hopefulness, his sympathetic vitality, had drawn many others through darkness into light, and settled them in cheerful hope. But with his own daughter he felt no power, — his heart trembled, — his hand was weak as the surgeon's who cannot operate when it is the life of his best beloved that lies under his hands.

Esther's deliverance came through that greatest and holiest of all the natural sacraments and means of grace, — Love.

An ancient gem has upon it a figure of a Psyche sitting with bound wings and blindfolded and weeping, whose bonds are being sundered by Love. It is an emblem of what often occurs in woman's life.

It has sometimes been thrown out as a sneer on periods of religious excitement, that they kindle the enthusiasm of man and woman towards each other into earthly attachments; but the sneer should wither as something satanic before the purity of love as it comes to noble natures. The man who has learned to think meanly of that, to associate it with vulgar thoughts and low desires, — the man who has not been lifted by love to aspire after unworldly excellence, to sigh for unworldly purity, to reverence unworldly good, — has lost his one great chance of regeneration.

Harry and Esther had moved side by side for months,

drawn daily to each other, — showing each other their compositions, studying out of the same book, arguing together in constant friendly differences, — and yet neither of them exactly conscious whither they were tending. A great social, religious excitement has often this result, that it throws open between friends the doors of the inner nature. How long, how long we may live in the same house, sit at the same table, hold daily converse with friends to whom and by whom these inner doors are closed! We cannot even tell whether we should love them more or less if they were open, — they are a mystery. But a great, pure, pervading, social excitement breaks like some early spring day around us; the sun shines, the birds sing; and forthwith open fly all the doors and windows, and let in the sunshine and the breeze and the bird-song!

In such an hour Esther saw that she was beloved! — beloved by a poet soul, — one of that rare order to whom the love of woman is a religion! — a baptism! — a consecration! Her life, hitherto so chill and colorless, so imprisoned and bound in the chains of mere and cold intellect, awoke with a sudden thrill of consciousness to a new and passionate life. She was as changed as the poor and silent Jungfrau of the Swiss mountains, when the gray and ghostly cold of the night bursts into rosy light, as the morning sunbeams rise upon it. The most auspicious and beautiful of all phenomena that ever diversify this weary life is that wonderful moment in which two souls, who hitherto have not known each other, suddenly, by the lifting of a veil or the falling of a barrier, become in one moment and forever after one. Henceforth each soul has in itself the double riches of the other. Each weakness is made strong by some corresponding strength in the other; for the truest union is where each soul has precisely the faculty which the other needs.

Harry was by nature and habit exactly the reverse of

Esther. His conclusions were all intuitions. His religion was an emanation from the heart, a child of personal experience, and not a formula of the head. In him was seen the beginning of that great *reaction* which took place largely in the young mind of New England against the tyranny of mere logical methods as applied to the ascertaining of moral truths.

The hour of full heart union that made them one placed her mind under the control of his. His simple faith in God's love was an antidote to her despondent fears. His mind bore hers along on its current. His imagination awakened hers. She was like one carried away by a winged spirit, lifted up and borne heavenward by his faith and love. She was a transfigured being. An atmosphere of joy brightened and breathed around her, her eyes had a mysterious depth, her cheeks a fluttering color. The winter was over and past for her, and the time of the singing of birds had come.

Mr. Avery was in raptures. The long agony was past. He had gained a daughter and a son, and he was too joyful, too willing to believe, to be analytic or critical. Long had he secretly hoped that such faultless consistency, such strict attention to duty, might perhaps indicate a secret work of divine grace, which would spring into joy if only recognized and believed in. But now, when the dove that had long wandered actually bent her white wings at the window of the ark, he stretched forth his hand and drew her in with a trembling eagerness.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AFTER THE REVIVAL

But the revival could not always last. The briefness of these periods, and the inevitable gravitation of everybody back to the things of earth, has sometimes been mentioned with a sneer.

"Where 's your revival now?"

The deacon whose face was so radiant as he talked of the love of Christ now sits with the same face drawn into knots and puckers over his account-book; and he thinks the money for the mortgage is due, and the avails for the little country store are small; and somehow a great family of boys and girls eat up and wear out; and the love of Christ seems a great way off, and the trouble about the mortgage very close at hand; and so the deacon is cross, and the world has its ready sneer for the poor man. "He can talk about the love of Christ, but he 's a terrible screw at a bargain," they say. "Ah, brother, have mercy!" the world screws us, and then we are tempted to screw the world. The soil is hard, the climate cold, labor incessant, little to come of it, and can you sneer that a poor soul has, for a brief season, forgotten all this and risen out of his body and above his cares, and been for a little while a glorified deacon instead of a poor, haggling, country store-keeper?

Plato says that we all once had wings, and that they still tend to grow out in us, and that our burnings and aspirations for higher things are like the teething pangs of children. We are trying to cut our wings. Let us not

despise these teething seasons. Though the wings do not become apparent, they may be starting under many a rough coat, and on many a clumsy pair of shoulders.

But in our little town of Cloudland, after the heavenly breeze had blown over, there were to be found here and there immortal flowers and leaves from the tree of life, which had blown into many a dwelling.

Poor old drunken Culver, who lived under the hill, and was said to beat his wife, had become a changed man, and used to come out to weekly prayer-meetings. Some tough old family quarrels, such as follow the settlement of wills in a poor country, had at last been brought to an end, and brother had shaken hands with brother: the long root of bitterness had been pulled up and burned on the altar of love. It is true that nobody had become an angel. Poor sharp-tongued Miss Krissy Pike still went on reporting the wasteful excesses she had seen in the minister's swill-barrel. And some that were crabbed and cross-grained before were so still, and some, perhaps, were a little more snarly than usual, on account of the late over-excitement.

A revival of religion merely makes manifest for a time what religion there is in a community, but it does not exalt men above their nature or above their times. It is neither revelation nor inspiration; it is impulse. It gives no new faculties, and it goes at last into that general average of influences which go to make up the progress of a generation.

One terrestrial result of the revival in our academy was that about half a dozen of the boys fell desperately in love with Tina. I have always fancied Tina to be one of that species of womankind that used to be sought out for priestesses to the Delphic oracle. She had a flame-like, impulsive, ethereal temperament, a capacity for sudden inspirations, in which she was carried out of herself, and spoke winged words that made one wonder whence they came. Her religious zeal had impelled her to be the adviser of

every one who came near her, and her sayings were quoted, and some of our shaggy, rough-coated mountain boys thought that they had never had an idea of the beauty of holiness before. Poor boys! they were so sacredly simple about it. And Tina came to me with wide brown eyes that sparkled like a cairngorm-stone, and told me that she believed she had found what her peculiar calling was: it was to influence young men in religion! She cited, with enthusiasm, the wonderful results she had been able to produce, the skeptical doubts she had removed, the conceptions of heavenly things that she had been able to pour into their souls.

The divine priestess and I had a grand quarrel one day, because I insisted upon it that these religious ministrations on the part of a beautiful young girl to those of the opposite sex would assuredly end in declarations of love and hopes of marriage.

Girls like Tina are often censured as flirts, — most unjustly so, too. Their unawakened nature gives them no power of perceiving what must be the full extent of their influence over the opposite sex. Tina was warmly social; she was enthusiastic and self-confident, and had precisely that spirit which should fit a woman to be priestess or prophetess, to inspire and to lead. She had a magnetic fervor of nature, an attractive force that warmed in her cheeks and sparkled in her eyes, and seemed to make summer around her. She excited the higher faculties, — poetry, ideality, blissful dreams seemed to be her atmosphere, — and she had a power of quick sympathy, of genuine, spontaneous outburst, that gave to her looks and words almost the value of a caress, so that she was an unconscious deceiver, and seemed always to say more for the individual than she really meant. All men are lovers of sunshine and spring gales, but they are no one's in particular; and he who seeks to hold them to one heart finds his

mistake. Like all others who have a given faculty, Tina loved its exercise, — she loved to influence, loved to feel her power, alike, over man and woman. But who does not know that the power of the sibyl is doubled by the opposition of sex? That which is only acquiescence in a woman friend becomes devotion in a man. That which is admiration from a woman becomes adoration in a man. And of all kinds of power which can be possessed by man or woman, there is none which I think so absolutely intoxicating as this of personal fascination. You may as well blame a bird for wanting to soar and sing as blame such women for the instinctive pleasure they feel in their peculiar kind of empire. Yet, in simple good faith, Tina did not want her friends of the other sex to become lovers. She was willing enough that they should devote themselves, under all sorts of illusive names of brother and friend and what-not, but when they proceeded to ask her for herself there was an instant revulsion, as when some person has unguardedly touched a strong electric circle. The first breath of passion repelled her; the friend that had been so agreeable the hour before was unendurable. Over and over again have I seen her go the same illusive round, always sure that in this instance it was understood that it was to be friendship, and only friendship, or brotherly or Christian love, till the hour came for the electric revulsion, and the friend was lost.

Tina had not learned the modern way of girls, who count their lovers and offers as an Indian does his scalps, and parade the number of their victims before their acquaintances. Every incident of this kind struck her as a catastrophe; and, as Esther, Harry, and I were always warning her, she would come to us like a guilty child, and seek to extenuate her offense. I think the girl was sincere in the wish she often uttered, that she could be a boy, and be loved as a comrade and friend only. "Why must, why would, they always persist in falling into this tiresome result?" "O Horace!"

she would say to me, "if I were only Tom Percival, I should be perfectly happy! but it is so stupid to be a girl!"

In my own secret soul I had no kind of wish that she should be Tom Percival, but I did not tell her so. No, I was too wise for that. I knew that my only chance of keeping my position as father confessor to this elastic young penitent consisted in a judicious suppression of all peculiar claims or hopes on my part, and I was often praised and encouraged for this exemplary conduct, and the question pathetically put to me, "Why could n't the others do as I did?" O Tina, Tina! did your brown eyes see, and your quick senses divine, that there was something in me which you dreaded to awaken, and feared to meet?

There are some men who have a faculty of making themselves the confidants of women. Perhaps because they have a certain amount of the feminine element in their own composition. They seem to be able to sympathize with them on their feminine side, and are capable of running far in a friendship without running fatally into love.

I think I had this power, and on it I founded my hopes in this regard. I enjoyed, in my way, almost as much celebrity in our little circle for advising and guiding my friends of the other sex as Tina did, and I took care to have on hand such a list of intimates as would prevent my name from being coupled with hers in the school gossip.

In these modern times, when man's fair sister is asking admission at the doors of classic halls, where man has hitherto reigned in monastic solitude, the query is often raised by our modern sociologists, Can man and woman, with propriety, pursue their studies together? Does the great mystery of sex, with its wide laws of attraction, and its strange, blinding, dazzling influences, furnish a sufficient reason why the two halves of creation, made for each other, should be kept during the whole course of education rigorously apart? This question, like a great many others, was solved without

discussion by the good sense of our Puritan ancestors, in throwing the country academies, where young men were fitted for college, open alike to both sexes, and in making the work of education of such dignity in the eyes of the community, that first-rate men were willing to adopt it for life. The consequences were, that, in some lonely mountain town, under some brilliant schoolmaster, young men and women actually were studying together the branches usually pursued in college.

"But," says the modern objector, "bring young men and young women together in these relations, and there will be flirtations and love affairs."

Even so, my friend, there will be. But flirtations and love affairs among a nice set of girls and boys, in a pure and simple state of community, where love is never thought of except as leading to lawful marriage, are certainly not the worst things that can be thought of, — not half so bad as the grossness and coarseness and roughness and rudeness of those wholly male schools in which boys fight their way on alone, with no humanizing influences from the other sex.

There was, to be sure, a great crop of love affairs, always green and vigorous, in our academy, and vows of eternal constancy interchanged between boys and girls who afterwards forgot and outgrew them, without breaking their hearts on either side; but for my own part, I think love-making over one's Latin and Greek much better than the fisting and cuffing and fagging of English schools, or than many another thing to which poor, blindly fermenting boyhood runs when separated from home, mother, and sister, and confined to an atmosphere and surroundings sharply and purely male. It is certain that the companionship of the girl improves the boy, but more doubt has been expressed whether the delicacy of womanhood is not impaired by an early experience of the flatteries and gallantries of the other sex. But, after all, it is no worse for a girl to

coquet and flirt in her Latin and mathematical class than to do it in the German or the polka. The studies and drill of the school have a certain repressive influence, wholly wanting in the ballroom and under the gaslight of fashionable parties. In a good school, the standard of attraction is, to some extent, intellectual. The girl is valued for something besides her person ; her disposition and character are thoroughly tested, the powers of her mind go for something, and, what is more, she is known in her every-day clothes. On the whole, I do not think a better way can be found to bring the two sexes together, without that false glamour which obscures their knowledge of each other, than to put them side by side in the daily drill of a good literary institution.

Certainly, of all the days that I look back upon, this academy life in Cloudland was the most perfectly happy. It was happier than college life, because of the constant intertwining and companionship with woman, which gave a domestic and family charm to it. It was happy because we were in the first flush of belief in ourselves and in life.

O that first belief! those incredible first visions! when all things look possible, and one believes in the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and sees enchanted palaces in the sunset clouds! What faith we had in one another, and how wonderful we were in one another's eyes! Our little clique of four was a sort of holy of holies in our view. We believed that we had secrets of happiness and progress known only to ourselves. We had full faith in one another's destiny ; we were all remarkable people, and destined to do great things.

At the close of the revival, we four, with many others, joined Mr. Avery's church, — a step which in New England, at this time, meant a conviction of some spiritual experience gained, of some familiar communion with the Great Invisible. Had I found it then ? Had I laid hold of that invisible

hand, and felt its warmth and reality? Had I heard the beatings of a warm heart under the cold exterior of the regular laws of nature, and found a living God? I thought so. That hand and heart were the hand and heart of Jesus, — the brother, the friend, and the interpreting God for poor, blind, and helpless man.

As we stood together before the pulpit, with about fifty others, on that Sunday most joyful to Mr. Avery's heart, we made our religious profession with ardent sincerity. The dear man found in that day the reward of all his sorrows, and the fruit of all his labors. He rejoiced in us as first fruits of the millennium, which, having already dawned in his good honest heart, he thought could not be far off from the earth.

Ah! those days of young religion were vaguely and ignorantly beautiful, like all the rest of our outlook on life. We were sincere, and meant to be very good and true and pure, and we knew so little of the world we were living in! The village of Cloudland, without a pauper, with scarcely an ignorant person in it, with no temptation, no dissipation, no vice, — what could we know there of the appalling questions of real life? We were hid there together, as in the hollow of God's hand; and a very sweet and lovely hiding-place it was.

Harry had already chosen his profession; he was to be a clergyman, and study with Mr. Avery when his college course was finished. In those days the young aspirants for the pulpit were not gathered into seminaries, but distributed through the country, studying, writing, and learning the pastoral work by sharing the labors of older pastors. Life looked, therefore, very bright to Harry, for life was, at that age, to live with Esther. Worldly care there was none. Mr. Avery was rich on two hundred and fifty dollars, and there were other places in the mountains where birds sung and flowers grew, where Esther could manage

another parsonage, as now her father's. She lived in the world of taste and intellect and thought. Her love of the beautiful was fed by the cheap delights of nature, and there was no onerous burden of care in looking forward to marriage, such as now besets a young man when he meditates taking to himself some costly piece of modern luxury, — some exotic bird, who must be fed on incense and odors, and for whom any number of gilded cages and costly surroundings may be necessary. Marriage in the days of which I speak was a very simple and natural affair, and Harry and Esther enjoyed the full pleasure of talking over and arranging what their future home should be; and Tina, quite as interested as they, drew wonderful pictures of it, and tinted them with every hue of the rainbow.

Mr. Avery talked with me many times to induce me to choose the same profession. He was an enthusiast for it; it was to him a calling that eclipsed all others, and he could wish the man he loved no greater blessedness than to make him a minister.

But I felt within myself a shrinking doubt of my own ability to be the moral guide of others, and my lifelong habit of half-skeptical contemplation made it so impossible to believe the New England theology with the perfect, undoubting faith that Mr. Avery had, that I dared not undertake. I did not disbelieve. I would not for the world controvert; but I could not believe with his undoubting enthusiasm. His sword and spear, so effective in his hands, would tremble in mine. I knew that Harry would do something. He had a natural call, a divine impulse, that led him from childhood to sacred ministries; and though he did not more than I accept the system of new-school theology as complete truth, yet I could see that it would furnish to his own devotional nature a stock from which vigorous grafts would shoot forth.

Shall I say, also, that my future was swayed uncon-

sciously by a sort of instinctive perception of what yet might be desired by Tina? Something a little more of this world I seemed to want to lay at her feet. I felt, somehow, that there was in her an aptitude for the perfume and brightness and gayeties of this lower world. And as there must be, not only clergymen, but lawyers, and as men will pay more for getting their own will than for saving their souls, I dreamed of myself, in the future, as a lawyer, — of course a rising one; of course I should win laurels at the bar, and win them by honorable means. I *would* do it; and Tina should be mistress of a fine, antique house in Boston, like the Kitterys', with fair, large gardens and pleasant prospects, and she should glitter and burn and twinkle like a gem in the very front ranks of society. Yes, I was ambitious, but it was for her.

One thing troubled me: every once in a while, in the letters from Miss Mehitable, came one from Ellery Davenport, written in a free, gay, dashing, cavalier style, and addressing Tina with a kind of patronizing freedom that made me ineffably angry. I wanted to shoot him. Such are the risings of the ancient Adam in us, even after we have joined the Church. Tina always laughed at me because I scolded and frowned at these letters, and, I thought, seemed to take rather a perverse pleasure in them. I have often speculated on that trait wherein lovely woman slightly resembles a cat; she cannot, for the life of her, resist the temptation to play with her mouse a little, and rouse it with gentle pats of her velvet paw, just to see what it will do.

I was, of course, understood to be under solemn bond and promise to love Tina only as a brother; but was it not a brother's duty to watch over his sister? With what satisfaction did I remember all Miss Debby Kittery's philippics against Ellery Davenport! Did I not believe every word of them heartily? I hated the French language with all

my soul, and Ellery Davenport's proficiency in it; and Tina could not make me more angry than by speaking with admiration of his graceful fluency in French, and expressing rather willful determinations that, when she got away from Mr. Rossiter's dictation, she would study it. Mr. Davenport had said that, when he came back to America, he would give her French lessons. He was always kind and polite, and she did n't doubt that he 'd give *me* lessons, too, if I 'd take them. "French is the language of modern civilization," said Tina, with the decision of a professor. But she made me promise that I would n't say a word to her about it before Mr. Rossiter.

"Now, Horace dear, you know," she said, "that French to him is just like a red rag to a bull; he 'd begin to roar and lash his sides the minute you said the words, and Mr. Rossiter and I are capital friends now. You 've no idea, Horace, how good he is to me. He takes such an interest in the development of my mind. He writes me a letter or note almost every week about it, and I take his advice, you know, and I would n't want to hurt his feelings about French or anything else. What do you suppose he hates the French so for? I should think he was a genuine Englishman, that had been kept awake nights during all the French wars."

"Well, Tina," I said, "you know there is a great deal of corrupt and dangerous literature in the French language."

"What nonsense, Horace! just as if there was n't in the English language, too, and I none the worse for it. And I 'm sure there are no ends of bad things in the classical dictionary and in the mythology. He 'd better talk about the French language! No, you may depend upon it, Horace, I shall learn French as soon as I leave school."

It will be inferred from this that my young lady had a considerable share of that quality which Milton represents

to have been the ruin of our first mother; namely, a determination to go her own way and see for herself, and have little confidential interviews with the serpent, notwithstanding all that could be urged to the contrary by sober old Adam.

"Of course, Adam," said Eve, "I can take care of myself, and don't want you always lumbering after me with your advice. You think the serpent will injure me, do you? That just shows how little you know about me. The serpent, Adam, is a very agreeable fellow, and helps one to pass away one's time; but he don't take me in. Oh no! there's no danger of his ever getting around *me!* So, my dear Adam, go your own way in the garden, and let me manage for myself."

Whether in the celestial regions there will be saints and angels who develop this particular form of self-will, I know not; but in this world of what Mr. Avery called "imperfect sanctification," religion does n't prevent the fair angels of the other sex from developing this quality in pretty energetic forms. In fact, I found that, if I was going to guide my Ariadne at all, I must let out my line fast, and let her feel free and unwatched.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE MINISTER'S WOOD-SPELL

It was in the winter of this next year that the minister's "wood-spell" was announced.

"What is a wood-spell?" you say. Well, the pastor was settled on the understanding of receiving two hundred dollars a year and his wood; and there was a certain day set apart in the winter, generally in the time of the best sleighing, when every parishioner brought the minister a sled-load of wood; and thus, in the course of time, built him up a mighty wood-pile.

It was one of the great seasons of preparation in the minister's family, and Tina, Harry, and I had been busy for two or three days beforehand in helping Esther create the wood-spell cake, which was to be made in quantities large enough to give ample slices to every parishioner. Two days beforehand the fire was besieged with a row of earthen pots, in which the spicy compound was rising to the necessary lightness, and Harry and I split incredible amounts of oven-wood, and in the evening we sat together stoning raisins round the great kitchen fire, with Mr. Avery in the midst of us, telling us stories and arguing with us, and entering into the hilarity of the thing like a boy. He was so happy in Esther, and delighted to draw the shy color into her cheeks, by some sly joke or allusion, when Harry's head of golden curls came into close proximity with her smooth black satin tresses.

The cake came out victorious, and we all claimed the merit of it; and a mighty cheese was bought, and every

shelf of the closet and all the dressers of the kitchen were crowded with the abundance.

We had a jewel of a morning, — one of those sharp, clear, sunny winter days, when the sleds squeak over the flinty snow and the little icicles tingle along on the glittering crust as they fall from the trees, and the breath of the slow-pacing oxen steams up like a rosy cloud in the morning sun, and then falls back condensed in little icicles on every hair.

We were all astir early, full of life and vigor. There was a holiday in the academy. Mr. Rossiter had been invited over to the minister's to chat and tell stories with the farmers, and give them high entertainment. Miss Nervy Randall, more withered and wild in her attire than usual, but eminently serviceable, stood prepared to cut cake and cheese without end, and dispense it with wholesome nods and messages of comfort. The minister himself heated two little old andirons red-hot in the fire, and therewith from time to time stirred up a mighty bowl of flip, which was to flow in abundance to every comer. Not then had the temperance reformation dawned on America, though ten years later Mr. Avery would as soon have been caught in a gambling-saloon as stirring and dispensing a bowl of flip to his parishioners.

Mr. Avery had recently preached a highly popular sermon on agriculture, in which he set forth the dignity of the farmer's life, from the text, "For the king himself is served of the field;" and there had been a rustle of professional enthusiasm in all the mountain farms around, and it was resolved, by a sort of general consent, that the minister's wood-pile this year should be of the best: none of your old makeshifts, — loads made out with crooked sticks and snapping chestnut logs, most noisy, and destructive to good wives' aprons. Good straight shagbark-hickory was voted none too good for the minister. Also the axe was lifted up

on many a proud oak and beech and maple. What destruction of glory and beauty there was in those mountain regions! How ruthlessly man destroys in a few hours that which centuries cannot bring again!

What an idea of riches in those glorious woodland regions! We read legends of millionaires who fed their fires with cinnamon and rolled up thousand-dollar bills into lamplighters, in the very wantonness of profusion. But what was that compared to the prodigality which fed our great roaring winter fires on the thousand-leafed oaks, whose conception had been ages ago, — who were children of the light and of the day, — every fragment and fibre of them made of most celestial influences, of sunshine and raindrops, and night dews and clouds, slowly working for centuries until they had wrought the wondrous shape into a gigantic miracle of beauty? And then snuffling old Heber Atwood, with his two hard-fisted boys, cut one down in a forenoon and made logs of it for the minister's wood-pile. If this isn't making light of serious things, we don't know what is. But think of your wealth, O ye farmers! — think what beauty and glory every year perish to serve your cooking-stoves and chimney-corners.

To tell the truth, very little of such sentiment was in Mr. Avery's mind or in any of ours. We lived in a woodland region, and we were *blasé* with the glory of trees. We did admire the splendid elms that hung their cathedral arches over the one central street of Cloudland Village, and on this particular morning they were all aflame like Aladdin's palace, hanging with emeralds and rubies and crystals, flashing and glittering and dancing in the sunlight. And when the first sled came squeaking up the village street, we did not look upon it as the funereal hearse bearing the honored corpse of a hundred summers, but we boys clapped our hands and shouted, "Hurrah for old Heber!" as his load of magnificent oak, well-bearded with gray moss, came scrunching into

the yard. Mr. Avery hastened to draw the hot flip-iron from the fire and stir the foaming bowl. Esther began cutting the first loaf of cake, and Mr. Rossiter walked out and cracked a joke on Heber's shoulder, whereat all the cast-iron lineaments of his hard features relaxed. Heber had not the remotest idea at this moment that he was to be branded as a tree-murderer. On the contrary, if there was anything for which he valued himself, and with which his heart was at this moment swelling with victorious pride, it was his power of cutting down trees. Man he regarded in a physical point of view as principally made to cut down trees, and trees as the natural enemies of man. When he stood under a magnificent oak, and heard the airy rustle of its thousand leaves, to his ear it was always a rustle of defiance, as if the old oak had challenged him to single combat; and Heber would feel of his axe and say, "Next winter, old boy, we 'll see, — we 'll see!" And at this moment he and his two tall, slab-sided, big-handed boys came into the kitchen with an uplifted air, in which triumph was but just repressed by suitable modesty. They came prepared to be complimented, and they were complimented accordingly.

"Well, Mr. Atwood," said the minister, "you must have had pretty hard work on that load; that's no ordinary oak; it took strong hands to roll those logs, and yet I don't see but two of your boys. Where are they all now?"

"Scattered, scattered!" said Heber, as he sat with a great block of cake in one hand, and sipped his mug of flip, looking, with his grizzly beard and shaggy hair and his iron features, like a cross between a polar bear and a man, — a very shrewd, thoughtful, reflective polar bear, however, quite up to any sort of argument with a man.

"Yes, they 're scattered," he said. "We 're putty lonesome now 't our house. Nobody there but Pars, Dass, Dill, Noah, and 'Liakim. I ses to Noah and 'Liakim this mornin', 'Ef we had all our boys to hum, we sh'd haf to

take up two loads to the minister, sartin, to make it fair on the wood-spell cake.' "

"Where are your boys now?" said Mr. Avery. "I have n't seen them at meeting now for a good while."

"Wal, Sol and Tim 's gone up to Umbagog, lumberin'; and Tite, he 's sailed to Archangel; and Jeduth, he 's gone to th' West Injies for molasses; and Pete, he 's gone to the West. Folks begins to talk now 'bout that 'ere Western kentry, and so Pete, he must go to Buffalo, and see the great West. He 's writ back about Niagry Falls. His letters is most amazin'. The old woman, she can't feel easy 'bout him no way. She insists 'pon it them Injuns 'll scalp him. The old woman is just as choice of her boys as ef she had n't got just es many es she has."

"How many sons have you?" said Harry, with a countenance of innocent wonder.

"Wal," said Heber, "I 've seen the time when I had fourteen good, straight boys, — all on 'em a turnin' over a log together."

"Dear me!" said Tina. "Had n't you any daughters?"

"Gals?" said Heber reflectively. "Bless you, yis. There 's been a gal or two 'long, in between, here an' there, — don't jest remember where they come; but, anyway, there 's plenty of women-folks 't our house."

"Why!" said Tina, with a toss of her pretty head, "you don't seem to think much of women."

"Good in their way," said Heber, shaking his head; "but Adam was fust formed, and then Eve, you know." Looking more attentively at Tina as she stood bridling and dimpling before him, like a bird just ready to fly, Heber conceived an indistinct idea that he must say something gallant, so he added, "Give all honor to the women, as weaker vessels, ye know; that 's sound doctrine, I s'pose."

Heber having now warmed and refreshed himself, and

endowed his minister with what he conceived to be a tip-top, irreproachable load of wood, proceeded, also, to give him the benefit of a little good advice, prefaced by gracious words of encouragement. "I wus tellin' my old woman this mornin' that I did n't grudge a cent of my subscription, 'cause your preachin' lasts well and pays well. Ses I, 'Mr. Avery ain't the kind of man that strikes twelve the fust time. He 's a man that 'll wear.' That 's what I said fust, and I 've followed y' up putty close in yer preachin'; but then I 've jest got one word to say to ye. Ain't free agency a-gettin' a leetle too top-heavy in yer preachin'? Ain't it kind o' overgrowin' sovereignty? Now, ye see, divine sovereignty hes got to be took care of as well as free agency. That 's all, that 's all. I thought I 'd jest drop the thought, ye know, and leave you to think on 't. This 'ere last revival you run along considerble on 'Whosoever will may come,' an' all that. Now, p'r'aps, ef you 'd jest tighten up the ropes a leetle t'other side, and give 'em sovereignty, the hull load would sled easier."

"Well," said Mr. Avery, "I 'm much obliged to you for your suggestions."

"Now there 's my wife's brother Josh Baldwin," said Heber, "he was delegate to the last Consociation, and he heerd your openin' sermon, and ses he to me, ses he, 'Your minister sartin doos slant a leetle towards th' Arminians; he don't quite walk the crack,' Josh says, ses he. Ses I, 'Josh, we ain't none on us perfect; but,' ses I, 'Mr. Avery ain't no Arminian, I can tell you. Yeh can't judge Mr. Avery by one sermon,' ses I. 'You hear him preach the year round, and ye 'll find that all the doctrines gits their place.' Ye see I stood up for ye, Mr. Avery, but I thought 't would n't do no harm to kind o' let ye know what folks is sayin'."

Here the theological discussion was abruptly cut short by Deacon Zachary Chipman's load, which entered the

yard amid the huzzahs of the boys. Heber and his boys were at the door in a minute. "Wal, railly, ef the deacon hain't come down with his shagbark! Wal, wal, the revival has operated on him some, I guess. Last year the deacon sent a load that I 'd ha' been ashamed to had in my back yard, an' I took the liberty o' tellin' on him so. Good, straight-grained shagbark. Wal, wal! I 'll go out an' help him onload it. Ef that 'ere holds out to the bottom, the deacon 's done putty wal, an' I shall think grace *has* made some progress."

The deacon, a mournful, dry, shivery-looking man, with a little round bald head, looking wistfully out of a great red comforter, all furry and white with the sharp frosts of the morning, and with his small red eyes weeping tears through the sharpness of the air, looked as if he had come as chief mourner at the hearse of his beloved hickory-trees. He had cut down the very darlings of his soul, and come up with his precious load, impelled by a divine impulse like that which made the lowing kine in the Old Testament story come slowly bearing the ark of God, while their brute hearts were turning toward the calves that they had left at home. Certainly, if virtue is in proportion to sacrifice, Deacon Chipman's load of hickory had more of self-sacrifice in it than a dozen loads from old Heber; for Heber was a forest prince in his way of doing things, and, with all his shrewd calculations of money's worth, had an open-handed generosity of nature that made him take a pride in liberal giving.

The little man shrank mournfully into a corner, and sipped his tumbler of flip and ate his cake and cheese as if he had been at a funeral.

"How are you all at home, deacon?" said Mr. Avery heartily.

"Just crawlin', thank you, — just crawlin'. My old woman don't git out much; her rheumatiz gits a dreadful

strong hold on her; and Mr. Avery, she hopes you 'll be round to visit her 'fore long. Since the revival she 's kind o' fell into darkness, and don't see no cheerin' views. She ses sometimes the universe ain't nothin' but blackness and darkness to her."

"Has she a good appetite?" said Mr. Avery.

"Wal, no. She don't enjoy her vittles much. Some say she 's got the jaunders. I try to cosset her up, and git her to take relishin' things. I tell her ef she 'd eat a good sassage for breakfast of a cold mornin', with a good hearty bit o' mince-pie, and a cup o' strong coffee, 't would kind o' set her up for the day; but, somehow, she don't git no nourishment from her food."

"There, Rossiter," we heard Mr. Avery whisper aside, "you see what a country minister has to do, — give cheering views to a dyspeptic that breakfasts on sausages and mince-pies."

And now the loads began coming thick and fast. Sometimes two and three, and sometimes four and five, came stringing along, one after another, in unbroken procession. For every one Mr. Avery had an appreciative word. Its especial points were noticed and commended, and the farmers themselves, shrewdest observers, looked at every load and gave it their verdict. By and by the kitchen was full of a merry, chatting circle, and Mr. Rossiter and Mr. Avery were telling their best stories, and roars of laughter came from the house.

Tina glanced in and out among the old farmers, like a bright tropical bird, carrying the cake and cheese to each one, laughing and telling stories, dispensing smiles to the younger ones, — treacherous smiles, which meant nothing, but made the hearts beat faster under their shaggy coats; and if she saw a red-fisted fellow in a corner, who seemed to be having a bad time, she would go and sit down by him, and be so gracious and warming and winning that his

tongue would be loosened, and he would tell her all about his steers and his calves and his last crop of corn and his load of wood, and then wonder all the way home whether he should ever have, in a house of his own, a pretty little woman like that.

By afternoon the minister's wood-pile was enormous. It stretched beyond anything before seen in Cloudland; it exceeded all the legends of neighboring wood-piles and wood-spells related by deacons and lay delegates in the late Consociation. And truly, among things picturesque and graceful, among childish remembrances, dear and cheerful, there is nothing that more speaks to my memory than the dear, good old mossy wood-pile. Harry, Tina, Esther, and I ran up and down and in and about the piles of wood that evening with a joyous satisfaction. How fresh and spicy and woodsy it smelt! I can smell now the fragrance of the hickory, whose clear, oily bark in burning cast forth perfume quite equal to cinnamon. Then there was the fragrant black birch, sought and prized by us all for the high-flavored bark on the smaller limbs, which was a favorite species of confectionery to us. There were also the logs of white birch, gleaming up in their purity, from which we made sheets of woodland parchment.

It is recorded of one man who stands in a high position at Washington, that all his earlier writing-lessons were performed upon leaves of the white birch bark, the only paper used in the family.

Then there were massive trunks of oak, veritable worlds of mossy vegetation in themselves, with tufts of green velvet nestled away in their bark, and sheets of greenness carpeting their sides, and little white, hoary trees of moss, with little, white hoary apples upon them, like miniature orchards.

One of our most interesting amusements was forming landscapes in the snow, in which we had mountains and hills

and valleys, and represented streams of water by means of glass, and clothed the sides of our hills with orchards of apple-trees made of this gray moss. It was an incipient practice at landscape-gardening, for which we found rich material in the wood-pile. Esther and Tina had been filling their aprons with these mossy treasures, for which we had all been searching together, and now we all sat chatting in the evening light. The sun was going down. The sleds had ceased to come, the riches of our woodland treasures were all in, the whole air was full of the trembling, rose-colored light that turned all the snow-covered landscape to brightness. All around us not a fence to be seen, — nothing but waving hollows of spotless snow, glowing with the rosy radiance, and fading away in purple and lilac shadows; and the evening stars began to twinkle, one after another, keen and clear through the frosty air, as we all sat together in triumph on the highest perch of the wood-pile. And Harry said to Esther, "One of these days they 'll be bringing in our wood," and Esther's cheeks reflected the pink of the sky.

"Yes, indeed!" said Tina. "And then I am coming to live with you. I 'm going to be an old maid, you know, and I shall help Esther as I do now. I never shall want to be married."

Just at this moment the ring of sleigh-bells was heard coming up the street. Who and what now? A little one-horse sleigh drove swiftly up to the door, the driver sprang out with a lively alacrity, hitched his horse, and came toward the house. In the same moment Tina and I recognized Ellery Davenport!

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ELLERY DAVENPORT

TINA immediately turned and ran into the house, laughing, and upstairs into her chamber, leaving Esther to go seriously forward, — Esther always tranquil and always ready. For myself, I felt such a vindictive hatred at the moment as really alarmed me. What had this good-natured man done, with his frank, merry face and his easy, high-bred air, that I should hate him so? What sort of Christian was I, to feel in this way? Certainly it was a temptation of the Devil, and I would put it down, and act like a reasonable being. So I went forward with Harry, and he shook hands with us.

"Hulloa, fellows!" he said; "you've made the great leap since I saw you, and changed from boys into men."

"Good-evening, Miss Avery," he said, as we presented him to her. "May I trench on your hospitality a little? I am a traveler in these arctic regions, and Miss Mehitable charged me to call and see after the health and happiness of our young friends here. I see," he said, looking at us, "that there need be no inquiries after health; your looks speak for themselves."

"Why, Percival!" he said, turning to Harry, "what a pair of shoulders you are getting! Genuine Saxon blood runs in your veins plainly enough, and one of these days, when you get to be Sir Harry Percival, you'll do honor to the name."

The proud, reserved blood flushed into Harry's face, and his blue eyes, usually so bright and clear, sparkled with dis-

pleasure. I was pleased to see that Ellery Davenport had made him angry. Yes, I said to myself, "What want of tact for him to dare to touch on a subject that Harry's most intimate friends never speak of!"

Esther looked fixedly at him with those clear, piercing hazel eyes, as if she were mentally studying him. I hoped she would not like him; yet why should I hope so?

He saw in a moment that he had made a mistake, and glided off quickly to another subject.

"Where's my fair little enemy, Miss Tina?" he said.

His "fair little enemy" was at this moment attentively studying him through a crack in the window-curtain. Shall I say, too, that the first thing she did, on rushing up to her room, was to look at her hair, and study herself in the glass, wondering how she would look to him now? Well, she had not seen herself for some hours, and self-knowledge is a virtue, we all know. And then our scamper over the wood-pile, in the fresh, evening air must have deranged something, for Tina had one of those rebellious heads of curls that every breeze takes liberties with, and that have to be looked after and watched and restrained. Esther's satin bands of hair could pass through a whirlwind, and not lose their gloss. It is curious how character runs even to the minutest thing, — the very hairs of our heads are numbered by it, — Esther, always in everything self-poised, thoughtful, reflective; Tina, the child of every wandering influence, tremulously alive to every new excitement, a wind-harp for every air of heaven to breathe upon.

It would be hard to say what mysterious impulse for good or ill made her turn and run when she saw Ellery Davenport. That turning and running in girls means something; it means that the electric chain has been struck in some way; but how?

Mr. Davenport came into the house, and was received with frank cordiality by Mr. Avery. He was a grandson

of Jonathan Edwards, and the good man regarded him as, in some sort, a son of the Church, and had, no doubt, instantaneous promptings for his conversion. Mr. Avery, though he believed stringently in the doctrine of total depravity, was very innocent in his application of it to individuals. That Ellery Davenport was a skeptic was well known in New England, wherever the reputation of his brilliant talents and person had circulated, and Mr. Avery had often longed for an opportunity to convert him. The dear, good man had no possible idea that anybody could go wrong from anything but mistaken views, and he was sure, in the case of Ellery Davenport, that his mind must have been perplexed about free agency and decrees, and thus he hailed with delight the Providence which had sent him to his abode. He plunged into an immediate conversation with him about the state of France, whence he had just returned.

Esther, meanwhile, went upstairs to notify Tina of his arrival.

"Mr. Ellery Davenport is below, and has inquired for you."

Nobody could be more profoundly indifferent to any piece of news.

"Was that Mr. Ellery Davenport? How stupid of him to come here when we are all so tired! I don't think I can go down; I am too tired."

Esther, straightforward Esther, took the thing as stated. Tina, to be sure, had exhibited no symptoms of fatigue up to that moment; but Esther now saw that she had been allowing her to over-exert herself.

"My darling," she said, "I have been letting you do too much altogether. You are quite right; you should lie down here quietly, and I'll bring you up your tea. Perhaps by and by, in the evening, you might come down and see Mr. Davenport, when you are rested."

"Oh, nonsense about Mr. Davenport! he does n't come to see me. He wants to talk with your father, I suppose."

"But he has inquired for you two or three times," said Esther, "and he really seems to be a very entertaining, well-informed man; so by and by, if you feel rested, I should think you had better come down."

Now I, for my part, wondered then and wonder now, and always shall, what all this was for. Tina certainly was not a coquette; she had not learned the art of trading in herself, and using her powers and fascinations as women do who have been in the world, and learned the precise value of everything that they say and do. She was, at least now, a simple child of nature, yet she acted exactly as an artful coquette might have done.

Ellery Davenport constantly glanced at the door as he talked with Mr. Avery, and shifted uneasily on his chair; evidently he expected her to enter, and when Esther returned without her he was secretly vexed and annoyed. I was glad of it, too, like a fool as I was. It would have been a thousand times better for my hopes had she walked straight out to meet him, cool and friendly, like Esther. There was one comfort; he was a married man; but then that crazy wife of his might die, or might be dead now. Who knew? To be sure, Ellery Davenport never had the air of a married man, — that steady, collected, sensible, restrained air which belongs to the male individual, conscious, wherever he moves, of a home tribunal, to which he is responsible. He had gone loose in society, pitied and petted and caressed by ladies, and everybody said, if his wife should die, Ellery Davenport might marry whom he pleased. Esther knew nothing about him, except a faint general outline of his history. She had no prepossessions for or against, and he laid himself out to please her in conversation, with that easy grace and quick perception of character which were habitual with him. Ellery Daven-

port had been a thriving young Jacobin, and Mr. Avery and Mr. Rossiter were fierce Federalists.

Mr. Rossiter came in to tea, and both of them bore down exultingly on Ellery Davenport in regard to the disturbances in France.

"Just what I always said!" said Mr. Rossiter. "French democracy is straight from the Devil. It's the child of misrule, and leads to anarchy. See what their revolution is coming to. Well, I may not be orthodox entirely on the question of total depravity, but I always admitted the total depravity of the whole French nation."

"Oh, the French are men of like passions with us!" said Ellery Davenport. "They have been ground down and debased and imbruted till human nature can bear no longer, and now there is a sudden outbreak of the lower classes, — the turning of the worm."

"Not a worm," said Mr. Rossiter; "a serpent, and a strong one."

"Davenport," said Mr. Avery, "don't you see that all this is because this revolution is in the hands of atheists?"

"Certainly I do, sir. These fellows have destroyed the faith of the common people, and given them nothing in its place."

"I am glad to see you recognize that," said Mr. Avery.

"Recognize, my dear sir! Nobody knows the worth of religion as a political force better than I do. Those French people are just like children, — full of sentiment, full of feeling, full of fire, but without the cold, judging, logical power that is frozen into men here by your New England theology. If I have got to manage a republic, give me Calvinists."

"You admit, then," said Mr. Avery delightedly, "the worth of Calvinism."

"As a political agent, certainly I do," said Ellery Davenport. "Men must have strong, positive religious beliefs

to give them vigorous self-government; and republics are founded on the self-governing power of the individual."

"Davenport," said Mr. Avery, affectionately laying his hand on his shoulder, "I should like to have said that thing myself. I could n't have put it better."

"But do you suppose," said Esther, trembling with eagerness, "that they will behead the queen?"

"Certainly I do," said Ellery Davenport, with that air of cheerful composure with which the retailer of the last horror delights to shock a listener. "Oh, certainly! I would n't give a pin for her chance. You read the account of the trial, I suppose; you saw that it was a foregone conclusion?"

"I did, indeed," said Esther. "But, O Mr. Davenport! can nothing be done? There is Lafayette; can he do nothing?"

"Lafayette may think himself happy if he keeps his own head on his shoulders," said Davenport. "The fact is, that there is a wild beast in every human being. In our race it is the lion. In the French race it is the tiger, — hotter, more tropical, more blindly intense in rage and wrath. Religion, government, education, are principally useful in keeping the human dominant over the beast; but when the beast gets above the human in the community, woe be to it."

"Davenport, you talk like an apostle," said Mr. Avery.

"You know the devils believe and tremble," said Ellery.

"Well, I take it," said Mr. Rossiter, "you've come home from France disposed to be a good Federalist."

"Yes, I have," said Ellery Davenport. "We must all live and learn, you know."

And so in one evening Ellery witched himself into the good graces of every one in the simple parsonage; and when Tina at last appeared she found him reigning king of the

circle. Mr. Rossiter, having drawn from him the avowal that he was a Federalist, now looked complacently upon him as a hopeful young neophyte. Mr. Avery saw evident marks of grace in his declarations in favor of Calvinism, while yet there was a spicy flavor of the prodigal son about him, — enough to engage him for his conversion. Your wild, wicked, witty prodigal son is to a spiritual huntsman an attractive mark, like some rare kind of eagle, whose ways must be studied, and whose nest must be marked, and in whose free, savage gambols in the blue air and on the mountain-tops he has a kind of hidden sympathy.

When Tina entered, it was with an air unusually shy and quiet. She took all his compliments on her growth and change of appearance with a negligent, matter-of-course air, seated herself in the most distant part of the room, and remained obstinately still and silent. Nevertheless, it was to be observed that she lost not a word that he said, or a motion that he made. Was she in that stage of attraction which begins with repulsion? or did she feel stirring within her that intense antagonism which woman sometimes feels toward man, when she instinctively divines that he may be the one who shall one day send a herald and call on her to surrender? Women are so intense, they have such prophetic, fore-reaching, nervous systems, that sometimes they appear to be endowed with a gift of prophecy. Tina certainly was an innocent child at this time, uncalculating, and acting by instinct alone, and she looked upon Ellery Davenport as a married man, who was and ought to be and would be nothing to her; and yet, for the life of her, she could not treat him as she treated other men.

If there was in him something which powerfully attracted, there was also something of the reverse pole of the magnet that repelled, and inspired a feeling not amounting to fear, but having an undefined savor of dread, as if some invisible spirit about him gave mysterious warning. There was a

sense of such hidden, subtile power under his suavities, the grasp of the iron hand was so plain through the velvet glove, that delicate and impressible natures felt it. Ellery Davenport was prompt and energetic and heroic; he had a great deal of impulsive good-nature, as his history in all our affairs shows. He was always willing to reach out the helping hand, and helped to some purpose when he did so; and yet I felt, rather than could prove, in his presence, that he could be very remorseless and persistently cruel.

Ellery Davenport inherited the whole Edwards nature, without its religious discipline, — a nature strong both in intellect and passion. He was an unbelieving Jonathan Edwards. It was this whole nature that I felt in him, and I looked upon the gradual interest which I saw growing in Tina toward him, in the turning of her thoughts on him, in her flights from him and attractions to him, as one looks on the struggles of a fascinated bird, who flees and returns, and flees and returns, each time drawn nearer and nearer to the diamond eyes.

These impressions which come to certain kinds of natures are so dim and cloudy, it is so much the habit of the counter-current of life to disregard them, and to feel that an impression of which you have no physical, external proof is of necessity an absurdity and a weakness, that they are seldom acted on, — seldom, at least, in New England, where the habit of logic is so formed from childhood in the mind, and the believing of nothing which you cannot prove is so constant a portion of the life education. Yet with regard to myself, as I have stated before, there was always a sphere of impression surrounding individuals, for which often I could give no reasonable account. It was as if there had been an emanation from the mind, like that from the body. From some it was an emanation of moral health and purity and soundness; from others, the sickly effluvium of moral decay, sometimes penetrating through all sorts of outward

graces and accomplishments, like the smell of death through the tuberoses and lilies on the coffin.

I could not prove that Ellery Davenport was a wicked man, but I had an instinctive abhorrence of him, for which I reproached myself constantly, deeming it only the madness of an unreasonable jealousy.

His stay with us at this time was only for a few hours. The next morning he took Harry alone and communicated to him some intelligence quite important to his future. "I have been to visit your father," he said, "and have made him aware what treasures he possesses in his children."

"His children have no desire that he should be made aware of it," said Harry coldly. "He has broken all ties between them and him."

"Well, well!" said Ellery Davenport. "The fact is Sir Harry has gone into the virtuous stage of an Englishman's life, where a man is busy taking care of his gouty feet, looking after his tenants, and repenting at his leisure of the sins of his youth. But you will find, when you come to enter college next year, that there will be a handsome allowance at your disposal; and, between you and me, I'll just say to you that young Sir Harry is about as puny and feeble a little bit of mortality as I ever saw. To my thinking, they 'll never raise him; and his life is all that stands between you and the estate. You know that I got your mother's marriage certificate, and it is safe in Parson Lothrop's hands. So you see there may be a brilliant future before you and your sister. It is well enough for you to know it early, and keep yourself and her free from entanglements. School friendships and flirtations and all that sort of thing are pretty little spring flowers, — very charming in their way and time; but it is n't advisable to let them lead us into compromising ourselves for life. If your future home is to be England, of course you will want your marriage to strengthen your position there."

"My future home will never be England," said Harry briefly. "America has nursed me and educated me, and I shall always be, heart and soul, an American. My life must be acted in this country."

The other suggestion contained in Ellery Davenport's advice was passed over without a word. Harry was not one that could discuss his private relations with a stranger. He could not but feel obliged to Ellery Davenport for the interest that he had manifested in him, and yet there was something about this easy, patronizing manner of giving advice that galled him. He was not yet old enough not to feel vexed at being reminded that he was young.

It seemed but a few hours, and Ellery Davenport was gone again; and yet how he had changed everything! The hour that he drove up, how perfectly innocently happy and united we all were! Our thoughts needed not to go beyond the present moment; the moss that we had gathered from the wood-pile, and the landscapes that we were going to make with it, were greater treasures than all those of that unknown world of brightness and cleverness and wealth and station, out of which Ellery Davenport had shot like a comet, to astonish us, and then go back and leave us in obscurity.

Harry communicated the intelligence given him by Ellery Davenport, first to me, then to Tina and Esther and Mr. Avery, but begged that it might not be spoken of beyond our little circle. It could and it should make no change, he said. But can expectations of such magnitude be awakened in young minds without a change?

On the whole, Ellery Davenport left a trail of brightness behind him, notwithstanding my sinister suspicions. "How open-handed and friendly it was of him," said Esther, "to come up here, when he has so much on his hands! He told father that he should have to be in Washington next week, to talk with them there about French affairs."

"And I hope he may do Tom Jefferson some good!" said Mr. Avery indignantly, — "teach him what he is doing in encouraging this hideous, atheistical French revolution! Why, it will bring discredit on republics, and put back the cause of liberty in Europe a century! Davenport sees into that as plainly as I do."

"He 's a shrewd fellow," said Mr. Rossiter. "I heard him talk three or four years ago, when he was over here, and he was about as glib-tongued a Jacobin as you 'd wish to see; but now my young man has come round handsomely. I told him he ought to tell Jefferson just how the thing is working. I go for government by the respectable classes of society."

"Davenport evidently is not a regenerated man," said Mr. Avery thoughtfully; "but as far as speculative knowledge goes, he is as good a theologian as his grandfather. I had a pretty thorough talk with him, before we went to bed last night, and he laid down the distinctions with a clearness and a precision that were astonishing. He sees right through that point of the difference between natural and moral inability, and he put it into a sentence that was as neat and compact and clear as a quartz crystal. I think there was a little rub in his mind on the consistency of the freedom of the will with the divine decrees, and I just touched him off with an illustration or two there, and I could see by the flash of his eye how quickly he took it. 'Davenport,' said I to him, 'you are made for the pulpit; you ought to be in it.'

"'I know it,' he said, 'Mr. Avery; but the trouble is, I am not good enough. I think,' he said, 'sometimes I should like to have been as good a man as my grandfather; but then, you see, there 's the world, the flesh, and the Devil, who all have something to say to that.'

"'Well,' says I, 'Davenport, the world and the flesh last only a little while' —

"'But the Devil and I last forever, I suppose you mean to say,' said he, getting up with a sort of careless swing; and then he said he must go to bed; but before he went he reached out his hand and smiled on me, and said, 'Good-night, and thank you, Mr. Avery.' That man has a beautiful smile. It 's like a spirit in his face."

Had Ellery Davenport been acting the hypocrite with Mr. Avery? Supposing a man is made like an organ, with two or three banks of keys, and ever so many stops, so that he can play all sorts of tunes on himself; is it being a hypocrite with each person to play precisely the tune, and draw out exactly the stop, which he knows will make himself agreeable and further his purposes? Ellery Davenport did understand the New England theology as thoroughly as Mr. Avery. He knew it from turret to foundation-stone. He knew all the evidences of natural and revealed religion, and, when he chose to do so, could make most conclusive arguments upon them. He had a perfect appreciation of devotional religion, and knew precisely what it would do for individuals. He saw into politics with unerring precision, and knew what was in men, and whither things were tending. His unbelief was purely and simply what has been called in New England the natural opposition of the heart to God. He loved his own will, and he hated control, and he determined, *per fas aut nefas*, to carry his own plans in this world, and attend to the other when he got into it. To have his own way, and to carry his own points, and to do as he pleased, were the ruling purposes of his life.

CHAPTER XXXIX

LAST DAYS IN CLOUDLAND

THE day was coming now that the idyl of Cloudland must end, and our last term wound up with a grand dramatic entertainment.

It was a time-honored custom in New England academies to act a play once a year as the closing exercise, and we resolved that our performance should surpass all others in scenic effect. The theme of the play was to be the story of Jephthah's daughter, from the Old Testament. It had been suggested at first to take Miss Hannah More's sacred drama upon this subject; but Tina insisted upon it that it would be a great deal better to write an original drama ourselves, each one taking a character, and composing one's own part.

Tina was to be Jephthah's daughter, and Esther her mother; and a long opening scene between them was gotten up by the two in a private session at their desks in the schoolroom one night, and, when perfected, was read to Harry and me for our critical judgment. The conversation was conducted in blank verse, with the usual appropriate trimmings and flourishes of that species of literature, and, on the whole, even at this time, I do not see but that it was quite as good as Miss Hannah More's.

There was some skirmishing between Harry and myself about our parts, Harry being, as I thought, rather too golden-haired and blue-eyed for the grim resolve and fierce agonies of Jephthah. Moreover, the other part was to be that of Tina's lover, and he was to act very desperate verses

indeed, and I represented to Harry privately that here, for obvious reasons, I was calculated to succeed. But Tina overruled me with that easy fluency of good reasons which the young lady always had at command. "Harry would make altogether the best lover," she said; "he was just cut out for a lover. Then, besides, what does Horace know about it? Harry has been practicing for six months, and Horace has n't even begun to think of such things yet."

This was one of those stringent declarations that my young lady was always making with regard to me, giving me to understand that her whole confidence in me was built entirely on my discretion. Well, I was happy enough to let it go so, for Ellery Davenport had gone like an evening meteor, and we had ceased talking and thinking about him. He was out of our horizon entirely. So we spouted blank verse at each other, morning, noon, and night, with the most cheerful courage. Tina and Harry had, both of them, a considerable share of artistic talent, and made themselves very busy in drawing and painting scenery, — a work in which the lady principal, Miss Titcomb, gave every assistance; although, as Tina said, her views of scenery were mostly confined to what was proper for tombstones. "But then," she added, "let her have the whole planning of my grave, with a great weeping willow over it, — that 'll be superb! I believe the weeping willows will be out by that time, and we can have real branches. Won't that be splendid!"

Then there was the necessity of making our drama popular, by getting in the greatest possible number of our intimate friends and acquaintances. So Jephthah had to marshal an army on the stage, and there was no end of paper helmets to be made. In fact, every girl in school who could turn her hand to anything was making a paper helmet.

There was to be a procession of Judæan maidens across

the stage, bearing the body of Jephthah's daughter on a bier, after the sacrifice. This took in every leading girl in the school; and as they were all to be dressed in white, with blue ribbons, one may fancy the preparation going on in all the houses far and near. There was also to be a procession of youths, bearing the body of the faithful lover, who, of course, was to die, to keep the departed company in the shades.

We had rehearsals every night for a fortnight, and Harry, Tina, and I officiated as stage-managers. It is incredible the trouble we had. Esther acted the part of Judæan matron to perfection, — her long black hair being let down and dressed after a picture in the Biblical Dictionary, which Tina insisted upon must be authentic. Esther, however, rebelled at the nose-jewels. There was no making her understand the Oriental taste of the thing; she absolutely declined the embellishment, and finally it was agreed among us that the nose-jewels should be left to the imagination.

Harry looked magnificent, with the help of a dark mustache, which Tina very adroitly compounded of black raveled yarn, arranging it with such delicacy that it had quite the effect of hair. The difficulty was that in impassioned moments the mustache was apt to get awry; and once or twice, while on his knees before Tina in tragical attitudes, this occurrence set her off into hysterical giggles, which spoiled the effect of the rehearsal. But at last we contrived a plaster which the most desperate plunges of agony could not possibly disarrange.

As my eyes and hair were black, when I had mounted a towering helmet overshadowed by a crest of bear-skin, fresh from an authentic bear that Heber Atwood had killed only two weeks before, I made a most fateful and portentous Jephthah, and flattered myself secretly on the tragical and gloomy emotions excited in the breasts of divers of my female friends.

I composed for myself a most towering and lofty entrance scene, when I came in glory at the head of my troops. I could not help plagiarizing Miss Hannah More's first line : —

"On Jordan's banks proud Ammon's banners wave."

Any writer of poems will pity me, when he remembers his own position, if he has ever tried to make a verse on some subject and been stuck and pierced through by some line of another poet, which so sticks in his head and his memory that there is no possibility of his saying the thing any other way. I tried beginning, —

"On Salem's plains the summer sun is bright;"

but when I looked at my troop of helmets and the very startling banner which we were to display, and reflected that Josh Billings was to give an inspiring blast on a bugle behind the scenes, I perfectly longed to do the glorious and magnificent, and this resounding line stood right in my way.

"Well, dear me, Horace," said Tina, "take it, and branch off from it, — make a text of it."

And so I did. How martial and Miltonic I was! I really made myself feel quite serious and solemn with the pomp and glory of my own language; but I contrived to introduce into my resounding verses a most touching description of my daughter, in which I exhausted Oriental images and similes on her charms. Esther and I were to have rather a tender scene, on parting, as she was to be my wife; but then we minded it not a jot. The adroitness with which both these young girls avoided getting into relations that might savor of reality was an eminent instance of feminine tact. And while Harry was playing the impassioned lover at Tina's feet, Esther looked at him slyly, with just the slightest shade of consciousness, — something as slight as the quivering of an eyelash, or a

tremulous flush on her fair cheek. There was fire under that rose-colored snow after all, and that was what gave the subtle charm to the whole thing.

We had an earnest discussion among us four as to what was proper to be done with the lover. Harry insisted upon it, that, after tearing his hair and executing all the other proprieties of despair, he should end by falling on his sword; and he gave us two or three extemporaneous representations of the manner in which he intended to bring out this last scene. How we screamed with laughter over these discussions, as Harry, whose mat of curls was somewhat prodigious, ran up and down the room, howling distractedly, running his fingers through his hair until each separate curl stood on end, and his head was about the size of a half-bushel! We nearly killed ourselves laughing over our tragedy, but still the language thereof was none the less broken-hearted and impassioned.

Tina was vindictive and bloodthirsty in her determination that the tragedy should be of the deepest dye. She exhibited the ferocity of a little pirate in her utter insensibility to the details of blood and murder, and would not hear of any concealment, or half-measures, to spare anybody's feelings. She insisted upon being stabbed on the stage, and she had rigged up a kitchen carving-knife with a handle of gilt paper, ornamented with various breastpins of the girls, which was celebrated in florid terms in her part of the drama as a Tyrian dagger.

"Why Tyrian," objected Harry, "when it is the Jews that are fighting the Ammonites?"

"Oh, nonsense, Harry! Tyrian sounds a great deal better, and the Ammonites, I don't doubt, had Tyrian daggers," said Tina, who displayed a feminine facility in the manufacture of facts. "Tyre, you know," she added, "was the country where all sorts of things were made: Tyrian purple and Tyrian mantles, — why, of course they must have

made daggers, and the Jews must have got them, — of course they must! I'm going to have it, not only a Tyrian dagger, but a sacred dagger, taken away from a heathen temple and consecrated to the service of the Lord. And only see what a sheath I have made for it! Why, at this distance it could n't be told from gold! And how do you suppose that embossed work is made? Why, it 's different-colored grains of rice and gilt paper rolled up!"

It must be confessed that nobody enjoyed Tina's successes more heartily than she did herself. I never knew anybody who had a more perfect delight in the work of her own hands.

It was finally concluded, in full concert, that the sacrifice was to be performed at an altar, and here came an opportunity for Miss Titcomb's proficiency in tombstones to exercise itself. Our altar was to be like the lower part of a monument, so we decided, and Miss Titcomb had numerous patterns of this kind, subject to our approval. It was to be made life-size, of large sheets of pasteboard, and wreathed with sacrificial garlands.

Tina was to come in at the head of a chorus of wailing maidens, who were to sing a most pathetic lamentation over her. I was to stand grim and resolved, with my eyes rolled up into my helmet, and the sacrificial Tyrian dagger in my hands, when she was to kneel down before the altar, which was to have real flame upon it. The top of the altar was made to conceal a large bowl of alcohol, and before the entering of the procession the lights were all to be extinguished, and the last scene was to be witnessed by the lurid glare of the burning light on the altar. Any one who has ever tried the ghostly, spectral, supernatural appearance which his very dearest friend may be made to have by this simple contrivance, can appreciate how very sanguine our hopes must have been of the tragical power of this dénouement.

All came about quite as we could have hoped. The

academy hall was packed and crammed to the ceiling, and our acting was immensely helped by the loudly expressed sympathy of the audience, who entered into the play with the most undisguised conviction of its reality. When the lights were extinguished, and the lurid flame flickered up on the altar, and Tina entered dressed in white with her long hair streaming around her, and with an inspired look of pathetic resignation in her large, earnest eyes, a sort of mournful shudder of reality came over me, and the words I had said so many times concerning the sacrifice of the victim became suddenly intensely real; it was a sort of stage illusion, an overpowering belief in the present.

The effect of the ghastly light on Tina's face, on Esther's and Harry's, as they grouped themselves around in the preconcerted attitudes, was really overwhelming.

It had been arranged that, at the very moment when my hand was raised, Harry, as the lover, should rush forward with a shriek, and receive the dagger in his own bosom. This was the last modification of our play, after many successive rehearsals, and the success was prodigious. I stabbed Harry to the heart, Tina gave a piercing shriek and fell dead at his side, and then I plunged the dagger into my own heart, and the curtain fell, amid real weeping and wailing from many unsophisticated, soft-hearted old women.

Then came the last scene, — the procession of youths and maidens across the stage, bearing the bodies of the two lovers, — the whole ending in an admirably constructed monument, over which a large willow was seen waving. This last gave to Miss Titcomb, as she said, more complete gratification than any scene that had been exhibited. The whole was a most triumphant success.

Heber Atwood's "old woman" declared that she caught her breath, and thought she "should have fainted clean away when she see that gal come in." And as there was scarcely a house in which there was not a youth or a

maiden who had borne part in the chorus, all Cloudland shared in the triumph.

By way of dissipating the melancholy feelings consequent upon the tragedy, we had a farce called "Our Folks," which was acted extemporaneously by Harry, Tina, and myself, consisting principally in scenes between Harry as Sam Lawson, Tina as Hepsy, and myself as Uncle Fliakim, come in to make a pastoral visit, and exhort them how to get along and manage their affairs more prosperously. There had been just enough strain upon our nerves, enough reality of tragic exultation, to excite that hysterical quickness of humor which comes when the nervous system is well up. I let off my extra steam in Uncle Fliakim with a good will, as I danced in in my black silk tights, knocking down the spinning-wheel, upsetting the cradle, setting the babies to crying, and starting Hepsy's tongue, which lost nothing of force or fluency in Tina's reproduction. How the little elf could have transformed herself in a few moments into such a peaked, sharp, wiry-featured, virulent-tongued virago was matter of astonishment to us all; while Harry, with a suit of fluttering old clothes, with every joint dissolving in looseness, and with his bushy hair in a sort of dismayed tangle, with his cheeks sucked in and his eyes protruding, gave an inimitable Sam Lawson. The house was convulsed; the screams and shrieks of laughter quite equaled the moans of distress in our tragedy.

And so the curtain fell on our last exhibition in Cloudland. The next day was all packing of trunks and taking of leave, and last words from Mr. Rossiter and Mr. Avery to the school, and settling of board-bills and school-bills, and sending back all the breastpins from the Tyrian dagger, and a confused kicking about of helmets, together with interchanges between various Johns and Joans of vows of eternal constancy, assurances from some fair ones that, "though they could not *love*, they should always regard as

brother," and from some of our sex to the same purport toward gentle-hearted Aramintas, — very pleasant to look upon and charming to dwell upon, — who were not, after all, our chosen Aramintas; and there was no end of three and four paged notes written, in which Susan Ann told Susan Jane that "never, never shall we forget the happy hours we 've spent together on Cloudland hill, — never shall the hand of friendship grow cold or the heart of friendship cease to beat with emotion." Poor dear souls all of us! We meant every word that we said.

It was only the other day that I called in a house on Beacon Street to see a fair sister, to whom on this occasion I addressed a most pathetic note, and who sent me a very pretty curl of golden-brown hair. Now she is Mrs. Boggs, and the sylph that was is concealed under a most enormous matron; the room trembles when she sets her foot down. But I found her heart in the centre of the ponderous mass, and, as I am somewhat inclining to be a stout old gentleman, we shook the room with our merriment. Such is life!

The next day Tina was terribly out of spirits, and had two or three hours of long and bitter crying, the cause of which none of our trio could get out of her. The morning that we were to leave she went around bidding good-by to everybody and everything, for there was not a creature in Cloudland that did not claim some part in her, and for whom she had not a parting word. And, finally, I proposed that we should go in to the schoolmaster together and have a last good time with him, and then, with one of her sudden impulsive starts, she turned her back on me.

"No, no, Horace! I don't want to see him any more!"

I was in blank amazement for a moment, and then I remembered the correspondence on the improvement of her mind.

"Tina, you don't tell me," said I, "that Mr. Rossiter has" —

She turned quickly round and faced on the defensive.

"Now, Horace, you need not talk to me, for it is not my fault! Could I dream of such a thing, now? *Could* I? Mr. Rossiter, of all men on earth! Why, Horace, I do love him dearly, I never had any father — that cared for me, at least," she said, with a quiver in her voice; "and he was beginning to seem so like a father to me. I loved him, I respected him, I reverenced him, — and now was I wrong to express it?"

"Why, but, Tina," said I, in amazement, "Mr. Rossiter cannot — he could not mean to marry you!"

"No, no. He says that he would not. He asked nothing. It all seemed to come out before he thought what he was saying, — that he has been thinking altogether too much of me, and that when I go it will seem as if *all* was gone that he cares for. I can't tell you how he spoke, Horace; there was something fearful in it, and he trembled. O Horace, he loves me nobly, disinterestedly, truly; but I felt guilty for it. I felt that such a power of feeling never ought to rest on such a bit of thistle-down as I am. Oh! why would n't he stay on the height where I had put him, and let me reverence and admire him, and have him to love as my father?"

"But Tina, you cannot, you must not now" —

"I know it, Horace. I have lost him for a friend and father and guide because he will love me too well."

And so ends Mr. Jonathan Rossiter's Spartan training.

My good friends of the American Republic, if ever we come to have mingled among the senators of the United States specimens of womankind like Tina Percival, we men remaining such as we by nature are and must be, will not the general hue of politics take a decidedly new and interesting turn?

Mr. Avery parted from us with some last words of counsel.

"You are going into college life, boys, and you must take care of your bodies. Many a boy breaks down because he keeps his country appetite and loses his country exercise. You must balance study and brain-work by exercise and muscle-work, or you 'll be down with dyspepsia, and won't know what ails you. People have wondered where the seat of original sin is; I think it 's in the stomach. A man eats too much and neglects exercise, and the Devil has him all his own way, and the little imps, with their long black fingers, play on his nerves like a piano. Never overwork either body or mind, boys. All the work that a man can do that can be *rested by one night's sleep is good for him*, but fatigue that goes into the next day is always bad. Never get discouraged at difficulties. I give you both this piece of advice. When you get into a tight place, and everything goes against you till it seems as if you could n't hold on a minute longer, *never give up then*, for that 's just the place and time that the tide 'll turn. Never trust to prayer without using every means in your power, and never use the means without trusting in prayer. Get your evidences of grace by pressing forward to the mark, and not by groping with a lantern after the boundary lines, — and so, boys, go, and God bless you!"

CHAPTER XL

WE ENTER COLLEGE

HARRY and I entered Harvard with honor. It was a matter of pride with Mr. Rossiter that his boys should go more than ready, — that an open and abundant entrance should be administered unto them in the classic halls; and so it was with us. We were fully prepared on the conditions of the sophomore year, and thus, by Mr. Rossiter's drill, had saved the extra expenses of one year of college life.

We had our room in common, and Harry's improved means enabled him to fit it up and embellish it in an attractive manner. Tina came over and presided at the inauguration, and helped us hang our engravings, and fitted up various little trifles of shell and moss work, — memorials of Cloudland.

Tina was now visiting at the Kitterys', in Boston, dispensing smiles and sunbeams, inquired after and run after by every son of Adam who happened to come in her way, all to no purpose, so far as her heart was concerned.

> "Favors to none, to all she smiles extends;
> Oft she rejects, but never once offends."

Tina's education was now, in the common understanding of society, looked upon as finished. Harry's and mine were commencing; we were sophomores in college. She was a young lady in society; yet she was younger than either of us, and had, I must say, quite as good a mind, and was fully as capable of going through our college course with us as of having walked thus far.

However, with her the next question was, Whom will

she marry ? — a question that my young lady seemed not in the slightest hurry to answer. I flattered myself on her want of susceptibility that pointed in the direction of marriage. She could feel so much friendship, — such true affection, — and yet was apparently so perfectly devoid of passion.

She was so brilliant, and so fitted to adorn society, that one would have thought she would have been *ennuyée* in the old Rossiter house, with only the society of Miss Mehitable and Polly ; but Tina was one of those whose own mind and nature are sufficient excitement to keep them always burning. She loved her old friend with all her little heart, and gave to her all her charms and graces, and wound round her in a wild-rose garland, like the eglantine that she was named after.

She had cultivated her literary tastes and powers. She wrote and sketched and painted for Miss Mehitable, and Miss Mehitable was most appreciative. Her strong, shrewd, well-cultivated mind felt and appreciated the worth and force of everything there was in Tina, and Tina seemed perfectly happy and satisfied with one devoted admirer. However, she had two, for Polly still survived, being of the dry immortal species, and seemed, as Tina told her, quite as good as new. And Tina once more had uproarious evenings with Miss Mehitable and Polly, delighting herself with the tumults of laughter which she awakened.

She visited and patronized Sam Lawson's children, gave them candy and told them stories, and now and then brought home Hepsy's baby for a half-day, and would busy herself dressing it up in something new of her own invention and construction. Poor Hepsy was one of those women fated always to have a baby in which she seemed to have no more maternal pleasure than an old fowling-piece. But Tina looked at her on the good-natured and pitiful side, although, to be sure, she did study her with a view to

dramatic representation, and made no end of capital of her in this way in the bosom of her own family.

Tina's mimicry and mockery had not the slightest tinge of contempt or ill-feeling in it; it was pure merriment, and seemed to be just as natural to her as the freakish instincts of the mocking-bird, who sits in the blossoming boughs above your head, and sends back every sound that you hear with a wild and airy gladness.

Tina's letters to us were full of this mirthful, effervescent sparkle, to which everything in Oldtown afforded matter of amusement; and the margins of them were scrawled with droll and lifelike caricatures, in which we recognized Sam Lawson, and Hepsy, and Uncle Fliakim, and, in fact, all the Oldtown worthies, — not even excepting Miss Mehitable and Polly, the minister and his lady, my grandmother, Aunt Lois, and Aunt Keziah. What harm was there in all this, when Tina assured us that aunty read the letters before they went, and laughed until she cried over them?

"But, after all," I said to Harry one day, "it 's rather a steep thing for girls that have kept step with us in study up to this point, and had their minds braced just as ours have been, with all the drill of regular hours and regular lessons, to be suddenly let down, with nothing in particular to do."

"Except to wait the coming man," said Harry, "who is to teach her what to do."

"Well," said I, "in the interval, while this man is coming, what has Tina to do but to make a frolic of life? — to live like a bobolink on a clover-head, to sparkle like a dewdrop in a thorn-bush, to whirl like a bubble on a stream? Why could n't she as well find the coming man while she is doing something as while she is doing nothing? Esther and you found each other while you were *working* side by side, your minds lively and braced, toiling at the same great ideas, knowing each other in the very noblest part of your natures;

and you are true companions; it is a mating of *souls* and not merely of bodies."

"I know that," said Harry, "I know, too, that in these very things that I set my heart on in the college course Esther is by far my superior. You know, Horace, that she was ahead of us in both Greek and mathematics; and why should she not go through the whole course with us as well as the first part? The fact is, a man never sees a subject thoroughly until he sees what a woman will think of it, for there is a woman's view of every subject, which has a different shade from a man's view, and that is what you and I have insensibly been absorbing in all our course hitherto. How splendidly Esther lighted up some of those passages of the Greek tragedy! and what a sparkle and glitter there were in some of Tina's suggestions! All I know, Horace, is that it is confoundedly dull being without them; these fellows are well enough, but they are cloddish and lumpish."

"Well," said I, "that is n't the worst of it. When such a gay creature of the elements as Tina is has nothing earthly to do to steady her mind and task her faculties, and her life becomes a mere glitter, and her only business to amuse the passing hour, it throws her open to all sorts of temptations from that coming man, whoever he may be. Can we wonder that girls love to flirt, and try their power on lovers? And then they are fair game for men who want to try their powers on them, and some man who has a vacation in his life purpose, and wants something to amuse him, makes an episode by getting up some little romance, which is an amusement to him, but all in all to her. Is that fair?"

"True," said Harry, "and there 's everything about Tina to tempt one; she is so dazzling and bewildering and exciting that a man might intoxicate himself with her for the mere pleasure of the thing, as one takes opium or champagne; and that sort of bewilderment and intoxication girls

often mistake for love! I would to Heaven, Horace, that I were as sure that Tina loves you as I am that Esther loves me."

"She does love me with her heart," said I, "but not with her imagination. The trouble with Tina, Harry, is this: she is a woman that can really and truly love a man as a sister, or as a friend, or as a daughter, and she is a woman that no man can love in that way long. She feels nothing but affection, and she always creates passion. I have not the slightest doubt that she loves me dearly, but I have a sort of vision that between her and me will come some one who will kindle her imagination; and all the more so that she has nothing serious to do, nothing to keep her mind braced, and her intellectual and judging faculties in the ascendant, but is fairly set adrift, just like a little flowery boat, without steersman or oars, on a bright, swift-rushing river. Did you ever notice, Harry, what a singular effect Ellery Davenport seems to have on her?"

"No," said Harry, starting and looking surprised. "Why, Horace, Ellery Davenport is a good deal older than she is, and a married man too."

"Well, Harry, didn't you ever hear of married men that liked to try experiments with girls? and in our American society they can do it all the more safely, because here, thank Heaven! nobody ever dreams but what marriage is a perfect regulator and safeguard."

"But," said Harry, rubbing his eyes like a person just waking up, "Horace, it must be the mere madness of jealousy that would put such a thing into your head. Why, there has n't been the slightest foundation for it."

"That is to say, Harry, you 've been in love with Esther, and your eyes and ears and senses have all run one way. But I have lived in Tina, and I believe I have a sort of divining power, so that I can almost see into her heart. I feel in myself how things affect her, and

I know, by feeling and sensation, that from her childhood Ellery Davenport has had a peculiar magnetic effect upon her."

"But, Horace, he is a married man," persisted Harry.

"A fascinating married man, victimized by a crazy wife, and ready to throw himself on the sympathies of womanhood in this affliction. The fair sex are such Good Samaritans that some fellows make capital of their wounds and bruises."

"Well, but," said Harry, "there 's not the slightest thing that leads me to think that he ever cared particularly about Tina."

"That 's because you are Tina's brother, and not her lover," said I. "I remember as long ago as when we were children, spending Easter at Madam Kittery's, how Ellery Davenport's eyes used to follow her, — how she used constantly to seem to excite and interest him; and all this zeal about your affairs, and his coming up to Oldtown, and cultivating Miss Mehitable's acquaintance so zealously, and making himself so necessary to her; and then he has always been writing letters or sending messages to Tina, and then, when he was up in Cloudland, did n't you see how constantly his eyes followed her? He came there for nothing but to see her, — I 'm perfectly sure of it."

"Well, Horace, you are about as absurd as a lover need be!" said Harry. "Mr. Davenport is rather a conceited man of the world; I think he patronized me somewhat extensively; but all this about Tina is a romance of your own spinning, you may be sure of it."

This conversation occurred one Saturday morning, while we were dressing and arraying ourselves to go into Boston, where we had engaged to dine at Madam Kittery's.

From the first of our coming to Cambridge, we had remembered our old-time friendship for the Kitterys, and it was an arranged thing that we were to dine with them

every Saturday. The old Kittery mansion we had found the same still, charming, quaint, inviting place that it seemed to us in our childhood. The years that had passed over the silvery head of dear old Madam Kittery had passed lightly and reverently, each one leaving only a benediction.

She was still to be found, when we called, seated, as in days long ago, on her little old sofa in the sunny window, and with her table of books before her, reading her Bible and Dr. Johnson, and speaking on "Peace and good-will to men."

As to Miss Debby, she was as up and down, as high-stepping and outspoken and pleasantly sub-acid as ever. The French Revolution had put her in a state of good-humor hardly to be conceived of. It was so delightful to have all her theories of the bad effects of republics on lower classes illustrated and confirmed in such a striking manner, that even her indignation at the destruction of such vast numbers of the aristocracy was but a slight feature in comparison with it. She kept the newspapers and magazines at hand which contained all the accounts of the massacres, mobbings, and outrages, and read them, in a high tone of voice, to her serving-women, butler, and footman after family prayers. She catechized more energetically than ever, and bore more stringently on ordering one's self lowly and reverently to one's betters, enforcing her remarks by the blood-and-thunder stories of the guillotine in France.

We were hardly seated in the house, and had gone over the usual track of inquiries which fill up the intervals, when she burst forth on us, triumphant.

"Well, my English papers have come in. Have you seen the last news from France? They 're at it yet, hotter than ever. One would think that murdering the king and queen might have satisfied them, but it don't a bit. Everybody is at it now, cutting everybody's else throat, and

there really does seem to be a prospect that the whole French nation will become extinct."

"Indeed," said Harry, with an air of amusement. "Well, Miss Debby, I suppose you think that would be the best way of settling things."

"Don't know but it would," said Miss Debby, putting on her spectacles in a manner which pushed her cap-border up into a bristling, helmet-like outline, and whirling over her file of papers, seemingly with a view to edifying us with the most startling morsels of French history for the six months past.

"Here 's the account of how they worshiped 'the Goddess of Reason'!" she cried, eying us fiercely, as if we had been part and party in the transaction. "Here 's all about how their philosophers and poets, and what not, put up a drab, and worshiped her as their 'Goddess of Reason'! And then they annulled the Sabbath, and proclaimed that 'Death is an Eternal Sleep'! Now, that is just what Tom Jefferson likes; it 's what suits him. I read it to Ellery Davenport yesterday, to show him what his principles come to."

Harry immediately hastened to assure Miss Debby that we were stanch Federalists, and not in the least responsible for any of the acts or policy of Thomas Jefferson.

"Don't know anything about that; you see it 's the Democrats that have got the country, and are running as hard as they can after France. Ah, here it is," Miss Debby added, still turning over her files of papers. "Here are the particulars of the execution of the queen. You can see, — they had her on a common cart, hands tied behind her, rattling and jolting, with all the vile fishwomen and dirty drabs of Paris leering and jeering at her; and they even had the cruelty," she added, coming indignantly at us as if we were responsible for it, "to stop the cart in front of her palace, so that she might be agonized at seeing her former

home and they might taunt her in her agonies! Anybody that can read that, and not say the French are devils, I 'd like to know what they are made of!"

"Well," said Harry, undismayed by the denunciations, "the French are an exceedingly sensitive and excitable people, who had been miseducated and mismanaged, and taught brutality and cruelty by the examples of the clergy and nobility."

"Excitable fiddlesticks!" said Miss Debby, who, like my grandmother, had this peculiar way of summing up an argument. "I don't believe in softening sin and iniquity by such sayings as that."

"But you must think," said Harry, "that the French are human beings, and only act as any human beings would under their circumstances."

"Don't believe a word of it!" said she shortly. "I agree with the man who said, 'God made two kinds of nature, — human nature and French nature.' Voltaire, was n't it, himself, that said the French were a compound of the tiger and the monkey? I wonder what Tom Jefferson thinks of his beautiful, darling French Republic now! I presume he likes it. I don't doubt it is just such a state of things as he is trying to bring to pass here in America."

"Oh," said I, "the Federalists will head him at the next election."

"I don't know anything about your Democrats and your Federalists," said she. "I thank Heaven I wash my hands of this government."

"And does King George still reign here?" said Harry.

"Certainly he does, young gentleman! Whatever happens to this government, I have no part in it."

Miss Debby, upon this, ushered us to the dinner-table, and said grace in a resounding and belligerent voice, and, sitting down, began to administer the soup to us with great determination.

Old Madam Kittery, who had listened with a patient

smile to all the preceding conversation, now began in a gentle aside to me: —

"I really don't think it is good for Debby to read those bloody-bone stories morning, noon, and night, as she does," she said. "She really almost takes away my appetite some days, and it does seem as if she would n't talk about anything else. Now Horace," she said to me appealingly, "the Bible says 'Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity,' and I can't help feeling that Debby talks as if she were really glad to see those poor French making such a mess of things. I can't feel so. If they are French, they 're our brothers, you know, and Debby really seems to go against the Bible, — not that she means to, dear," she added earnestly, laying her hand on mine; "Debby is an excellent woman; but, between you and me, I think she is a little excitable."

"What 's that mother 's saying?" said Miss Debby, who kept a strict survey over all the sentiments expressed in her household. "What was mother saying?"

"I was saying, Debby, that I did n't think it did any good for you to keep reading over and over those dreadful things."

"And who does keep reading them over?" said Miss Debby, "I should like to know. I'm sure I don't; except when it is absolutely necessary to instruct the servants and put them on their guard. I 'm sure I am as averse to such details as anybody can be." Miss Debby said this with that innocent air with which good sort of people very generally maintain that they never do things which most of their acquaintances consider them particular nuisances for doing.

"By the bye, Horace," said Miss Debby, by way of changing the subject, "have you seen Ellery Davenport since he came home?"

"No," said I, with a sudden feeling as if my heart was sinking down into my boots. "Has he come home to stay?"

"Oh yes," said Miss Debby; "his dear, sweet, model,

Republican France grew too hot for him. He had to flee to England, and now he has concluded to come home and make what mischief he can here, with his democratic principles and his Rousseau and all the rest of them."

"Debby is n't as set against Ellery as she seems to be," said the old lady, in an explanatory aside to me. "You know, dear, he 's her cousin."

"And you really think he intends to live in this country for the future?" said I.

"Well, I suppose so," said Miss Debby. "You know that poor, miserable, crazy wife of his is dead, and my lord is turned loose on society as a widower at large, and all the talk here in good circles is, Who is the blessed woman that shall be Mrs. Ellery Davenport the second? The girls are all pulling caps for him, of course."

It was perfectly ridiculous and absurd, but I suddenly lost all appetite for my dinner, and sat back in my chair playing with my knife and fork, until the old lady said to me compassionately: —

"Why, dear, you don't seem to be eating anything! Debby, put an oyster *pâté* on Horace's plate; he don't seem to relish his chicken."

I had to submit to the oyster *pâté*, and sit up and eat it like a man, to avoid the affectionate importunity of my dear old friend. In despair, I plunged into the subject least agreeable to me, and remarked: —

"Mr. Davenport is a very brilliant man, and I suppose in very good circumstances; is he not?"

"Yes, enormously rich," said Miss Debby. "He still passes for young, with that face of his that never will grow old, I believe. And then he has a tongue that could wheedle a bird out of a tree; so I don't know what is to hinder him from having as many wives as Solomon, if he feels so disposed. I don't imagine there is anybody would say 'No' to him."

"Well, I hope he will marry a good girl," said the old lady, "poor dear boy. I always loved Ellery; and he would make any woman happy, I am sure."

"That depends," said Miss Debby, "on what the woman wants. If she wants laces and cashmere shawls, and horses and carriages, and a fine establishment, Ellery Davenport will give her those. But if she wants a man to love her all her life, that 's what Ellery Davenport can't do for any woman. He is a man that never cares for anything he has got. It 's always the thing that he has n't got that he 's after. It 's the 'pot of money at the end of the rainbow,' or the 'philosopher's stone,' or any other thing that keeps a man all his life on a canter, and never getting anywhere. And no woman will ever be anything to him but a temporary diversion. He can amuse himself in too many ways to want her."

"Yes," said the old lady, "but when a man marries he promises to cherish her."

"My dear mother, that is in the Church Service, and I assure you Ellery Davenport has got beyond that. He 's altogether too fine and wise and enlightened to think that a man should spend his days in cherishing a woman merely because he went through the form of marriage with her in church. Much cherishing his crazy wife got of him! but he used his affliction to get half a dozen girls in love with him, so that he might be cherished himself. I tell you what, — Ellery Davenport lays out to marry a real angel. He 's to swear and she 's to pray! He is to wander where he likes, and she is always to meet him with a smile and ask no questions. That is the part for Mrs. Ellery Davenport to act."

"I don't believe a word of it, Debby," said the old lady. "You 'll see now, — you 'll see."

CHAPTER XLI

NIGHT TALKS

We walked home that night by starlight, over the long bridge between Boston and Cambridge, and watched the image of the great round yellow moon just above the horizon, breaking and shimmering in the water into a thousand crystal fragments, like an orb of golden glass. We stopped midway in the calm obscurity, with our arms around each other, and had one of those long talks that friends, even the most confidential, can have only in the darkness. Cheek to cheek under the soft dim mantle of the starlight, the night flowers of the innermost soul open. We talked of our loves, our hopes, of the past, the present, and the great hereafter, in which we hoped forever to mingle. And then Harry spoke to me of his mother, and told in burning words of that life of bitterness and humiliation and sorrow through which he had passed with her.

"O Harry," said I, "did it not try your faith, that God should have left her to suffer all that?"

"No, Horace, no, because in all that suffering she conquered, — she was more than conqueror. Oh, I have seen such divine peace in her eyes, at the very time when everything earthly was failing her! Can I ever doubt? I who saw into the heaven when she entered? No, I have seen her crowned, glorified, in my soul as plainly as if it had been a vision."

At that moment I felt in myself that magnetic vibration of the great central nerves which always prefaced my spiritual visions, and looking up I saw that the beautiful woman I

had seen once before was standing by Harry, but now more glowing and phosphorescent than I saw her last; there was a divine, sweet, awful radiance in her eyes, as she raised her hands above his head, he, meanwhile, stooping down and looking intently into the water.

"Harry," said I, after a few moments of silence, "do you believe your mother sees and knows what you do in this world, and watches over you?"

"That has always been one of those things that I have believed without reasoning," said Harry musingly. "I never could help believing it; and there have been times in my life when I felt so certain that she must be near me, that it seemed as though, if I spoke, she must answer, — if I reached out my hand, it would touch hers. It is one of my instinctive certainties. It is curious," he added, "that the difference between Esther and myself is just the reverse kind of that which generally subsists between man and woman. She has been all her life so drilled in what logicians call reasoning, that, although she has a glorious semi-spiritual nature, and splendid moral instincts, she never trusts them. She is like an eagle that should insist upon climbing a mountain by beak and claw instead of using wings. She must always see the syllogism before she will believe."

"For my part," said I, "I have always felt the tyranny of the hard New England logic, and it has kept me from really knowing what to believe about many phenomena of my own mind that are vividly real to me." Here I faltered and hesitated, and the image that seemed to stand by us slowly faded. I could not and did not say to Harry how often I had seen it.

"After all I have heard and thought on this subject," said Harry, "my religious faith is what it always was, — a deep, instinctive certainty, an embrace by the soul of *something* which it could not exist without. My early recollec-

tions are stronger than anything else of perfect and utter helplessness, of troubles entirely beyond all human aid. My father" — He stopped and shuddered. "Horace, he was one of those whom intemperance makes mad. For a great part of his time he was a madman, with all the cunning, all the ingenuity, the devilishness of insanity, and I have had to stand between him and my mother, and to hide Tina out of his way." He seemed to shudder as one convulsed. "One does not get over such a childhood," he said. "It has made all my religious views, my religious faith, rest on two ideas, — man's helplessness, and God's helpfulness. We are sent into this world in the midst of a blind, confused jangle of natural laws, which we cannot by any possibility understand, and which cut their way through and over and around us. They tell us nothing; they have no sympathy; they hear no prayer; they spare neither vice nor virtue. And if we have no friend above to guide us through the labyrinth, if there is no Father's heart, no helping hand, of what use is life? I would throw myself into this river, and have it over with at once."

"I always noticed your faith in prayer," said I. "But how can it consist with this known inflexibility of natural laws?"

"And what if natural laws were meant as servants of man's moral life? What if Jesus Christ and his redeeming, consoling work were the first thing, and all things made by him for this end? Inflexible physical laws are necessary; their very inflexibility is divine order; but 'what law cannot do, in that it is weak through the flesh, God did by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.' Christ delivers us from slavery to natural law; he comes to embody and make visible the paternal idea; and if you and I, with our small knowledge of physical laws, can so turn and arrange them that their inflexible course shall help, and not hinder, much more can their Maker."

"You always speak of Christ as God."

"I have never thought of God in any other way," he answered. "Christ is the God of sufferers; and those who learn religion by sorrow always turn to him. No other than a suffering God could have helped my mother in her anguish."

"And do you think," said I, "that prayer is a clue strong enough to hold amid the rugged realities of life?"

"I do," said Harry. "At any rate, there is my great venture; that is my life-experiment. My mother left me that as her only legacy."

"It certainly seems to have worked well for you so far, Harry," said I, "and for me too, for God has guided us to what we scarcely could have hoped for, two poor boys as we were, and so utterly helpless. But then, Harry, there must be a great many prayers that are never answered."

"Of course," said Harry, "I do not suppose that God has put the key of all the universe into the hand of every child; but it is a comfort to have a Father to ask of, even though he refuse five times out of six, and it makes all the difference between having a father and being an orphan. Yes," he added, after a few moments of thought, "my poor mother's prayers seemed often to be denied, for she prayed that my father might reform. She often prayed from day to day that we might be spared miseries that he still brought upon us. But I feel sure that she has seen by this time that her Father heard the prayers that he seemed to deny, and her faith in him never failed. What is that music?" he said.

At this moment there came softly over the gleaming water, from the direction of the sea, the faintest possible vibration of a sound, like the dying of an organ tone. It might be from some ship, hidden away far off in the mist, but the effect was soft and dreamy as if it came from some spirit-land.

"I often think," said Harry, listening for a moment, "that no one can pronounce on what this life has been to him until he has passed entirely through it, and turns around and surveys it from the other world. I think then we shall see everything in its true proportions; but till then we must walk by faith and not by sight, — faith that God loves us, faith that our Saviour is always near us, and that all things are working together for good."

"Harry," said I, "do you ever think of your father now?"

"Horace, there is where I wish I could be a more perfect Christian than I am. I have a bitter feeling toward him, that I fear is not healthful, and that I pray God to take away. To-night, since we have been standing here, I have had a strange, remorseful feeling about him, as if some good spirit were interceding for him with me, and trying to draw me to love and forgive him. I shall never see him, probably, until I meet him in the great Hereafter, and then, perhaps, I shall find that her prayers have prevailed for him."

It was past twelve o'clock when we got to our room that night, and Harry found lying on his table a great sealed package from England. He opened it and found in it, first, a letter from his father, Sir Harry Percival. The letter was as follows: —

HOLME HOUSE.

MY SON HARRY, — I have had a dozen minds to write to you before now, having had good accounts of you from Mr. Davenport; but, to say truth, have been ashamed to write. I did not do right by your mother, nor by you and your sister, as I am now free to acknowledge. She was not of a family equal to ours, but she was too good for me. I left her in America, like a brute as I was, and God has judged me for it.

I married the woman my father picked out for me, when I came home, and resolved to pull up and live soberly like a decent man. But nothing went well with me. My children died one after another; my boy lived to be seven years old, but he was feeble, and now he is dead too, and you are the heir. I am thinking that I am an old sinner, and in a bad way. Have had two turns of gout in the stomach that went hard with me, and the doctor don't think I shall stand many such. I have made my will with a provision for the girl, and you will have the estate in course. I do wish you would come over and see a poor old sinner before he dies. It is n't in the least jolly being here, and I am dev'lish cross, they say. I suppose I am, but if you were minded to come I 'd try and behave myself, and so make amends for what 's past beyond recall.

Your father,

HARRY PERCIVAL.

Accompanying this letter was a letter from the family lawyer, stating that on the 18th day of the month past Sir Harry Percival had died of an attack of gout. The letter went on to give various particulars about the state of the property, and the steps which had been taken in relation to it, and expressing the hope that the arrangements made would meet with his approbation.

It may well be imagined that it was almost morning before we closed our eyes, after so very startling a turn in our affairs. We lay long discussing it in every possible light, and now first I found courage to tell Harry of my own peculiar experiences, and of what I had seen that very evening. "It seems to me," said Harry, when I had told him all, "as if I felt what you saw. I had a consciousness of a sympathetic presence, something breathing over me like wind upon harp-strings, something particularly predisposing

me to think kindly of my father. My feeling towards him has been the weak spot of my inner life always, and I had a morbid horror of him. Now I feel at peace with him. Perhaps her prayers have prevailed to save him from utter ruin."

CHAPTER XLII

SPRING VACATION AT OLDTOWN

It was the spring vacation, and Harry and I were coming again to Oldtown; and ten miles back, where we changed horses, we had left the crawling old Boston stage and took a footpath through a patch of land known as the Spring Pasture. Our road lay pleasantly along the brown, sparkling river, which was now just waked up, after its winter nap, as fussy and busy and chattering as a housekeeper that has overslept herself. There were downy catkins on the willows, and the water-maples were throwing out their crimson tassels. The sweet-flag was just showing its green blades above the water, and here and there, in nooks, there were yellow cowslips reflecting their bright gold faces in the dark water.

Harry and I had walked this way that we might search under the banks and among the dried leaves for the white waxen buds and flowers of the trailing arbutus. We were down on our knees scraping the leaves away, when a well-known voice came from behind the bushes.

"Wal, lordy massy, boys! Here ye be! Why, I ben up to Siah's tahvern, an' looked inter the stage, an' did n't see yer. I jest thought I 'd like to come an' kind o' meet yer. Lordy massy, they 's all a-lookin' out for yer 't all the winders; 'n' Aunt Lois, she 's ben bilin' up no end o' doughnuts, an' tearin' round 'nough to drive the house out o' the winders, to git everything ready for ye. Why, it beats the Prodigal Son all holler, the way they 're killin' the fatted calves for yer; an' everybody in Oldtown 's a wantin' to see Sir Harry."

"Oh, nonsense, Sam!" said Harry, coloring. "Hush about that! We don't have titles over here in America."

"Lordy massy, that 's just what I wus a-tellin' on 'em up to store. It 's a pity, ses I, this yere happened arter peace was signed, 'cause we might ha' had a real live Sir Harry round among us. An' I think Lady Lothrop, she kind o' thinks so too."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Harry. "Sam, are the folks all well?"

"O lordy massy, yes! Chirk and chipper as can be. An' there 's Tiny, they say she 's a-goin' to be an heiress nowadays, an' there 's no end of her beaux. There 's Ellery Devenport ben down here these two weeks, a-puttin' up at the tahvern, with a landau an' a span o' crack horses, a-takin' on her out to ride every day, an' Miss Mehitable, she 's so sot up, she 's reelly got a bran-new bonnet, an' left off that 'ere old un o' hern that she 's had trimmed over spring an' fall goin' on these 'ere ten years. I thought that 'ere bonnet 's going to last out my time, but I see it hain't. An' she 's got a new Injy shawl, that Mr. Devenport gin her. Yeh see, he understan's courtin', all round."

This intelligence, of course, was not the most agreeable to me. I hope, my good friends, that you have never known one of those quiet hours of life, when, while you are sitting talking and smiling, and to all appearance quite unmoved, you hear a remark or learn a fact that seems to operate on you as if somebody had quietly turned a faucet that was letting out your very life. Down, down, down, everything seems sinking, the strength passing away from you as the blood passes when an artery is cut. It was with somewhat this sensation that I listened to Sam's chatter, while I still mechanically poked away the leaves and drew out the long waxy garlands that I had been gathering for *her!*

Sam seated himself on the bank, and, drawing his knees

up to his chin and clasping his hands upon them, began moralizing in his usual strain.

"Lordy massy, lordy massy, what a changin' world this 'ere is! It 's jest see-saw, teeter-tawter, up an' down. To-day it 's I 'm up an' you 're down, an' to-morrow it 's you 're up and I 'm down! An' then, by an' by, death comes an' takes us all. I 've ben kind o' dwellin' on some varses to-day, —

'Death, like a devourin' delūge,
Sweeps all away.
The young, the old, the middle-aged,
To him become a prey.'

That 'ere is what Betty Poganut repeated to me the night we sot up by Statiry's corpse. Yeh 'member Statiry Poganut? Well, she 's dead at last. Yeh see, we all gits called in our turn. We hain't no continuin' city."

"But, Sam," said I, "how does business get along? Have n't you anything to do but tramp the pastures and moralize?"

"Wal," said Sam, "I 've hed some pretty consid'able spells of blacksmithin' lately. There 's Mr. Devenport, he 's sech a pleasant-spoken man, he told me he brought his team all the way up from Bostin a purpose so that I might 'tend to their huffs. I 've ben a-shoein' on 'em fresh all round, an' the off horse, he 'd kind o' got a crack in his huff, an' I 've been a-doctorin' on 't; an' Mr. Devenport, he said he had n't found nobody that knew how to doctor a horse's huffs ekal to me. Very pleasant-spoken man Mr. Devenport is; he 's got a good word for everybody. They say there ain't no end to his fortin, an' he goes a-flingin' on 't round, right an' left, like a prince. Why, when I 'd done shoein' his hosses, he jest put his hand inter his pocket an' handed me out ten dollars! ripped it out, he did, jest as easy as water runs! But there was Tiny a-standin' by; I think she kind o' sot him on. O lordy

massy, it 's plain to be seen that she rules him. It 's all cap in hand to her, an' 'What you will, madam,' an' 'Will ye have the end o' the rainbow, or a slice out o' the moon, or what is it?' It 's all ekal to him, so as Miss Tiny wants it. Lordy massy," he said, lowering his voice confidentially to Harry, "course these 'ere things is all temporal, an' our hearts ought n't to be too much sot on 'em; still he 's got about the most amazin' fortin there is round Bostin. Why, if you b'lieve me, 'tween you an' me, it 's him as owns the Dench Place, where you and Tiny put up when you wus children! Don't ye 'member when I found ye? Ye little guessed whose house ye wus a-puttin' up at then; did yer? Lordy massy, lordy massy, who 'd ha' thought it? The wonderful ways of Providence! 'He setteth the poor on high, an' letteth the runagates continoo in scarceness.' Wal, wal, it 's a kind o' instructive world."

"Do you suppose," said Harry to me, in a low voice, "that this creature knows anything of what he is saying?"

"I 'm afraid he does," said I. "Sam seems to have but one talent, and that is picking up news; and generally his guesses turn out to be about true."

"Sam," said I, by way of getting him to talk of something else, rather than on what I dreaded to hear, "you have n't said a word about Hepsy and the children. How are they all?"

"Wal, the young uns hes all got the whoopin' cough," said Sam, "an' I 'm e'en a'most beat out with 'em. For fust it 's one barks, an' then another, an' then all together. An' then Hepsy, she gets riled, an' she scolds; an', take it all together, a feller's head gits kind o' turned. When ye hes a lot o' young uns, there 's allus suthin' a-goin' on among 'em; ef 't ain't whoopin' cough, it 's measles; an' ef 't ain't measles, it 's chicken-pox, or else it 's mumps, or scarlet fever, or suthin'. They 's all got to be gone through, fust an' last. It 's enough to wean a body from

this world. Lordy massy, yest'day arternoon I see yer Aunt Keziah an' yer Aunt Lois out a-cuttin' cowslip greens t'other side o' th' river, an' the sun it shone so bright, an' the turtles an' frogs they kind o' peeped so pleasant, an' yer aunts they sot on the bank so kind o' easy an' free, an' I stood there a-lookin' on 'em an' I could n't help a-thinkin', 'Lordy massy, I wish 't I wus an old maid.' Folks 'scapes a great deal that don't hev no young uns a-hangin' onter 'em."

"Well, Sam," said Harry, "is n't there any news stirring round in the neighborhood?"

"S'pose ye hain't heerd about the great church quarrel over to Needmore?" he said.

"Quarrel? Why, no," said Harry. "What is it about?"

"Wal, ye see, there 's a kind o' quarrel ris 'tween Parson Perry and Deacon Bangs. I can't jest git the right on 't, but it 's got the hull town afire. I b'lieve it cum up in a kind o' dispute how to spell Saviour. The Deacon he 's on the school committee, an' Parson Perry he 's on 't; an' the Deacon he spells it *iour*, an' Parson Perry he spells it *ior*, an' they would n't neither on 'em give up. Wal, ye know Deacon Bangs, — I *s'pose* he 's a Christian, — but, lordy massy, he 's one o' yer dreadful ugly kind o' Christians, that, when they gits their backs up, will do worse things than sinners will. I reelly think they kind o' take advantage o' their position, an' think, es they 're goin' to be saved by grace, grace shell hev enough on 't. Now, to my mind, ef either on 'em wus to give way, the Deacon oughter give up to the Parson; but the Deacon he don't think so. Between you and me," said Sam, "it 's my opinion that ef Ma'am Perry hed n't died jest when she did, this 'ere thing would never ha' growed to where 't is. But ye see Ma'am Perry she died, an' that left Parson Perry a widower, an' folks did talk about him an' Mahaley

Bangs, an' fact was, 'long about last spring, Deacon Bangs an' Mis' Bangs an' Mahaley wus jest as thick with the Parson as they could be. Why, Granny Watkins told me about their havin' on him to tea two an' three times a week, an' Mahaley 'd make two kinds o' cake, an' they 'd have preserved watermelon rinds an' peaches an' cranberry saace, an' then 't was all sugar an' all sweet, an' the Deacon he talked 'bout raisin' Parson Perry's salary. Wal, then, ye see, Parson Perry he went over to Oldtown an' married Jerushy Peabody. Now, Jerushy 's a nice, pious gal, an' it 's a free country, an' parsons hes a right to suit 'emselves as well 's other men. But Jake Marshall, he ses to me, when he heerd o' that, ses he, 'They 'll be findin' fault with Parson Perry's doctrines now afore two months is up; ye see if they don't.' Wal, sure enuff, this 'ere quarrel 'bout spellin' Saviour come on fust, an' Deacon Bangs he fit the Parson like a bulldog. An' next town-meetin' day he told Parson Perry right out before everybody thet he was wuss then 'n Armenian, — thet he was a rank Pelagian; 'n' he said there was folks thet hed taken notes o' his sermons for two years back, 'n' they could show thet he hed n't preached the real doctrine of total depravity, nor 'riginal sin, an' thet he 'd got the plan o' salvation out o' j'int intirely; he was all kind o' flattin' out onter morality. An' Parson Perry he sed he 'd preached jest 's he allers hed. 'Tween you 'n' me, we know he must ha' done that, cause these 'ere ministers thet hev to go preachin' round 'n' round like a hoss in a cider-mill, — wal, course they must preach the same sermons over. I s'pose they kind o' trim 'em up with new collars 'n' wris'bands. But we used to say thet Parson Lothrop hed a bar'l o' sermons, 'n' when he got through the year he turned his bar'l t'other side up, and begun at t'other end. Lordy massy, who 's to know it, when half on em 's asleep? And I guess the preachin' 's full as good as the pay anyhow. Wal, the upshot on 't all

is, they got a gret council there, an' they 're a-tryin' Mr. Perry for heresy an' what not. Wal, I don't b'lieve there 's a yaller dog goes inter the Needmore meetin'-house now that ain't got his mind made up one way or t'other about it. Yer don't hear nothin' over there now 'xcept about Armenians an' Pelagians an' Unitarians an' total depravity. Lordy massy! wal, they lives up to that doctrine any way. What do ye think of old Sphyxy Smith's bein' called in as one o' the witnesses in council? She don't know no more 'bout religion than an' old hetchel, but she 's ferce as can be on Deacon Bangs's side, an' Old Crab Smith he hes to hev his say 'bout it."

"Do tell," said Harry wonderingly, "if that old creature is alive yet!"

"'Live? Why, yis, ye may say so," said Sam. "Much alive as ever he was. Ye see he kind o' pickles himself in hard cider, an' I dunno but he may live to hector his wife till he 's ninety. But he 's gret on the trial now, an' very much interested 'bout the doctrines. He ses thet he hain't heard a sermon on sovereignty or 'lection, or reprobation, sence he can remember. Wal, t'other side, they say they don't see what business Old Crab an' Miss Sphyxy hev to be meddlin' so much, when they ain't church members. Why, I was over to Needmore town-meetin' day jest to hear 'em fight over it; they talked a darned sight more 'bout that than 'bout the turnpikes or town business. Why, I heard Deacon Brown (he 's on the Parson's side) tellin' Old Crab he did n't see what business he had to boss the doctrines, when he wa'n't a church member, and Old Crab said it was his bisness about the doctrines, 'cause he paid to hev 'em. 'Ef I pay for good strong doctrine, why, I want to hev good strong doctrine,' says Old Crab, says he. 'Ef I pays for hell-fire, I want to hev hell-fire, and hev it hot too. I don't want none o' your prophesyin' smooth things. Why,' says he, 'look at Dr. Stern. His folks hes

the very hair took off their heads 'most every Sunday, and he don't get no more 'n we pay Parson Perry. I tell yew,' says Old Crab, 'he 's a-lettin' on us all go to sleep, and it 's no wonder I ain't in the church.' Ye see, Old Crab and Sphyxy, they seem to be kind o' settin' it down to poor old Parson Perry's door that he hain't converted 'em, an' made saints on 'em long ago, when they 've paid up their part o' the salary reg'lar, every year. Jes' so onreasonable folks will be; they give a man two hundred dollars a year an' his wood, an' spect him to git all on 'em inter the kingdom o' heaven, whether they will or no, jest as the angels got Lot's wife and daughters out o' Sodom."

"That poor little old woman!" said Harry. "Do tell if she is living yet!"

"Oh yis, she 's all right," said Sam; "she 's one o' these 'ere little thin, dry old women that keep a good while. But ain't ye heerd? their son Obid 's come home an' bought a farm, an' married a nice gal, and he insists on it his mother shall live with him. An' so Old Crab and Miss Sphyxy, they fight it out together. So the old woman is delivered from him most o' the time. Sometimes he walks over there an' stays a week, an' takes a spell o' aggravatin' on 'er, that kind o' sets him up, but he 's so busy now 'bout the quarrel 't I b'lieve he lets her alone."

By this time we had reached the last rail fence which separated us from the grassy street of Oldtown, and here Sam took his leave of us.

"I promised Hepsy when I went out," he said, "thet I 'd go to the store and git her some corn meal, but I 'll be round agin in th' evening. Look 'ere," he added, "I wus out this mornin', an' I dug some sweet-flag root for yer. I know ye used ter like sweet-flag root. 'T ain't time for young wintergreen yit, but here 's a bunch I picked yer, with the berries an' old leaves. Do take 'em, boys, jest for sake o' old times!"

We thanked him, of course; there was a sort of aroma of boyhood about these things, that spoke of spring days and melting snows, and long Saturday afternoon rambles that we had had with Sam years before. And we saw his lean form go striding off with something of an affectionate complacency.

"Horace," said Harry, the minute we were alone, "you must n't mind too much about Sam's gossip."

"It is just what I have been expecting," said I; "but in a few moments we shall know the truth."

We went on until the square white front of the old Rossiter house rose upon our view. We stopped before it, and down the walk from the front door to the gate, amid the sweet budding lilacs, came gleaming and glancing the airy form of Tina. So airy she looked, so bright, so full of life and joy, and threw herself into Harry's arms, laughing and crying.

"O Harry, Harry! God has been good to us! And you, dear brother Horace," she said, turning to me and giving me both her hands, with one of those frank, loving looks that said as much as another might say by throwing herself into your arms. "We are all so happy!" she said.

I determined to have it over at once, and I said, "Am I then to congratulate you, Tina, on your engagement?"

She laughed and blushed, and held up her hand, on which glittered a great diamond, and hid her face for a moment on Harry's shoulder.

"I could n't write to you about it, boys, — I could n't! But I meant to tell you myself, and tell you the first thing, too. I wanted to tell you about him, because I think you none of you know him, or half how noble and good he is! Come, come in," she said, taking us each by the hand and drawing us along with her. "Come in and see Aunty; she 'll be so glad to see you!"

If there was any one thing for which I was glad at this

moment, it was that I had never really made love to Tina. It was a comfort to me to think that she did not and could not possibly know the pain she was giving me. All I know is that, at the moment, I was seized with a wild, extravagant gayety, and rattled and talked and laughed with a reckless abandon that quite astonished Harry. It seemed to me as if every ludicrous story and every droll remark that I had ever heard came thronging into my head together. And I believe that Tina really thought that I was sincere in rejoicing with her. Miss Mehitable talked with us gravely about it while Tina was out of the room. It was most sudden and unexpected, she said, to her; she always had supposed that Ellery Davenport had admired Tina, but never that he had thought of her in this way. In a worldly point of view, the match was a more brilliant one than could ever have been expected. He was of the best old families in the country, — of the Edwards and the Davenport stock, — his talents were splendid, and his wealth would furnish everything that wealth could furnish. "There is only one thing," she continued gravely; "I am not satisfied about his religious principles. But Tina is an enthusiast, and has perfect faith that he will come all right in this respect. He seems to be completely dazzled and under her influence now," said Miss Mehitable, taking a leisurely pinch of snuff; "but then, you see, that's a common phenomenon, about this time in a man's life. But," she added, "where there is such a strong attachment on both sides, all we can do is to wish both sides well, and speed them on their way. Mr. Davenport has interested himself in the very kindest manner in regard to both Tina and Harry, and I suppose it is greatly owing to this that affairs have turned out as prosperously as they have. As you know, Sir Harry made a handsome provision for Tina in his will. I confess I am glad of that," she said, with a sort of pride. "I would n't want my little

Tina to have passed into his arms altogether penniless. When first love is over, men sometimes remember those things."

"If my father had not done justice to Tina in his will," said Harry, "I should have done it. My sister should not have gone to any man a beggar."

"I know that, my dear," said Miss Mehitable, "but still it is a pleasure to think that your father did it. It was a justice to your mother's memory that I am glad he rendered."

"And when is this marriage to take place?" said I.

"Mr. Davenport wants to carry her away in June," said Miss Mehitable. "That leaves but little time; but he says he must go to join the English Embassy, certainly by midsummer, and as there seems to be a good reason for his haste, I suppose I must not put my feelings in the way. It seems now as if I had had her only a few days, and she has been so very sweet and lovely to me. Well," said she, after a moment, "I suppose the old sweetbrier-bushes feel lonesome when we cut their blossoms and carry them off, but the old thorny things must n't have blossoms if they don't expect to have them taken. That 's all we scraggly old people are good for."

CHAPTER XLIII

WHAT OUR FOLKS THOUGHT ABOUT IT

At home, that evening, before the great open fire, still the same subject was discussed. Tina's engagement to Ellery Davenport was spoken of as the next most brilliant stroke of luck to Harry's accession to the English property. Aunt Lois was all smiles and suavity, poor dear old soul! How all the wrinkles and crinkles of her face smoothed out under the influence of prosperity! and how providential everything appeared to her! "Providence gets some pay-days," said an old divine. Generally speaking, his account is suffered to run on with very lax attention. But when a young couple make a fortunate engagement, or our worldly prospects take a sudden turn to go as we would, the account of Providence is gladly balanced; praise and thanksgiving come in over-measure.

For my part, I could n't see the Providence at all in it, and found this looking into happiness through other people's eyes a very fatiguing operation.

My grandfather and grandmother, as they sat pictured out by the light of a magnificent hickory fire, seemed scarcely a year older; but their faces this evening were beaming complacently; and my mother, in her very quiet way, could scarcely help triumphing over Aunt Lois. I was a sophomore in Cambridge, and Harry a landed proprietor, and Tina an heiress to property in her own right, instead of our being three poor orphan children without any money, and with the up-hill of life to climb.

In the course of the evening, Miss Mehitable came in

with Ellery Davenport and Tina. Now, much as a man will dislike the person who steps between him and the lady of his love, I could not help, this evening, myself feeling the power of that fascination by which Ellery Davenport won the suffrages of all hearts.

Aunt Lois, as usual, was nervous and fidgety with the thought that the call of the splendid Mr. Davenport had surprised them all at the great kitchen fire, when there was the best room cold as Nova Zembla. She looked almost reproachfully at Tina, and said apologetically to Mr. Davenport, "We are rough working folks, and you catch us just as we are. If we 'd known you were coming, we 'd have had a fire in the parlor."

"Then, Miss Badger, you would have been very cruel, and deprived us of a rare enjoyment," said he. "What other land but our own America can give this great, joyous, abundant home-fire? The great kitchen fire of New England," he added, seating himself admiringly in front of it, "gives you all the freshness and simplicity of forest life, with a sense of shelter and protection. It 's like a camp-fire in the woods, only that you have a house over you, and a good bed to sleep in at hand; and there is nothing that draws out the heart like it. People never can talk to each other as they do by these great open fires. For my part," he said, "I am almost a Fire-worshiper. I believe in the divine properties of flame. It purifies the heart and warms the affections, and when people sit and look into the coals together, they feel a sort of glow of charity coming over them that they never feel anywhere else."

"Now, I should think," said Aunt Lois, "Mr. Davenport, that you must have seen so much pomp and splendor and luxury abroad, that our rough life here would seem really disagreeable to you."

"Quite the contrary," said Ellery Davenport. "We go abroad to appreciate our home. Nature is our mother, and

the life that is lived nearest to nature is, after all, the one that is the pleasantest. I met Brant at court last winter. You know he was a wild Indian to begin with, and he has seen both extremes, for now he is Colonel Brant, and has been moving in fashionable society in London. So I thought he must be a competent person to decide on the great question between savage and civilized life and he gave his vote for the savage."

"I wonder at him," said my grandmother.

"Well, I remember," said Tina, "we had one day and night of savage life — don't you remember, Harry? — that was very pleasant. It was when we stayed with the old Indian woman, — do you remember? It was all very well, so long as the sun shone; but then when the rain fell, and the wind blew, and the drunken Indian came home, it was not so pleasant."

"That was the time, young lady," said Ellery Davenport, looking at her with a flash in his blue eyes, "that you established yourself as housekeeper on my premises! If I had only known it, I might have picked you up then, as a waif on my grounds."

"It 's well you did not," said Tina, laughing; "you would have found me troublesome to keep. I don't believe you would have been as patient as dear old Aunty, here," she added, laying her head on Miss Mehitable's shoulder. "I was a perfect brier-rose, — small leaves and a great many prickles."

"By the bye," said Harry, "Sam Lawson has been telling us, this morning, about our old friends Miss Asphyxia Smith and Old Crab."

"Is it possible," said Tina, laughing, "that those creatures are living yet? Why, I look back on them as some awful pre-Adamite monsters."

"Who was Miss Asphyxia?" said Ellery Davenport. "I have n't heard of her."

"Oh, 't was a great threshing-machine of a woman that caught me between its teeth some years ago," said Tina. "What do you suppose would ever have become of me, Aunty, if she had kept me? Do you think she ever could have made me a great stramming, threshing, scrubbing, floor-cleaning machine, like herself? She warned Miss Mehitable," continued Tina, looking at Ellery and laughing shyly, "that I never should grow up to be good for anything; and she spoke a fatal truth, for, since she gave me up, every mortal creature has tried to pet and spoil me. Dear old Aunty and Mr. Rossiter have made some feeble attempts to make me good for something, but they have n't done much at it."

"Thank Heaven!" said Ellery Davenport. "Who would think of training a wild rose? I sometimes look at the way a sweet-brier grows over one of our rough stone walls, and think what a beautiful defiance it is to gardeners."

"That is all very pretty to say," said Tina, "when you happen to be where there are none but wild roses; but when you were among marchionesses and duchesses, how was it then?"

For answer, Ellery Davenport bent over her, and said something which I could not hear. He had the art, without seeming to whisper, of throwing a sentence from him so that it should reach but one ear; and Tina laughed and blushed and dimpled, and looked as if a thousand little graces were shaking their wings around her.

It was one of Tina's great charms that she was never for a moment at rest. In this she was like a bird, or a brook, or a young tree, in which there is always a little glancing shimmer of movement. And when anything pleased her, her face sparkled as a river does when something falls into it. I noticed Ellery Davenport's eyes followed all these little motions as if he had been enchanted. Oh, there was no doubt that the great illusion, the delicious magic, was in full development between them. And Tina looked so gladly

satisfied, and glanced about the circle and at him with such a quiet triumph of possession, and such satisfaction in her power over him, that it really half reconciled me to see that she was so happy. And, after all, I thought to myself as I looked at the airy and *spirituel* style of her beauty, — a beauty that conveyed the impression of fragility and brilliancy united to the highest point, — such a creature as that is made for luxury, made for perfume and flowers and jewelry and pomp of living and obsequious tending, for old aristocratic lands and court circles, where she would glitter as a star. And what had I to offer, — I, a poor sophomore in Harvard, owing that position to the loving charity of my dear old friend? My love to her seemed a madness and a selfishness, — as if I had wished to take the evening star out of the heavens and burn it for a household lamp. "How fortunate, how fortunate," I thought to myself, "that I have never told her! For now I shall keep the love of her heart. We are friends, and she shall be the lady of my heart forever, — the lady of my dreams."

I knew, too, that I had a certain hold upon her; and even at this moment I saw her eye often, as from old habit, looking across to me, a little timidly and anxiously, to see what I thought of her prize. She was Tina still, — the same old Tina, that always needed to be approved and loved and sympathized with, and have all her friends go with her, heart and hand, in all her ways. So I determined to like him.

At this moment Sam Lawson came in. I was a little curious to know how he had managed it with his conscience to leave his domestic circle under their trying circumstances, but I was very soon satisfied as to this point.

Sam, who had watched the light flaring out from the windows, and flattened his nose against the window-pane while he announced to Hepsy that "Mr. Devenport and Miss Mehitable and Tiny were all a-goin' into the Dea-

con's to spend th' evenin','' could not resist the inexpressible yearning to have a peep himself at what was going on there.

He came in with a most prostrate air of dejection. Aunt Lois frowned with stern annoyance, and looked at my grandmother, as much as to say, "To think *he* should come in when Mr. Davenport is making a call here!"

Ellery Davenport, however, received him with a patronizing cheerfulness, — "Why, hulloa, Sam, how are you?" It was Ellery Davenport's delight to start Sam's loquacity and develop his conversational powers, and he made a welcoming movement toward the block of wood in the chimney-corner. "Sit down," he said, — "sit down, and tell us how Hepsy and the children are."

Tina and he looked at each other with eyes dancing with merriment.

"Wal, wal," said Sam, sinking into the seat and raising his lank hands to the fire, while his elbows rested on his knees, "the children 's middlin', — Doctor Merrill ses he thinks they 've got past the wust on 't, — but Hepsy, she's clean tuckered out, and kind o' discouraged. An' I thought I 'd come over an' jest ask Mis' Badger ef she would n't kind o' jest mix 'er up a little milk punch to kind o' set 'er up agin."

"What a considerate husband!" said Ellery Davenport, glancing around the circle with infinite amusement.

My grandmother, always prompt at any call on her charity, was already half across the floor towards her buttery, whence she soon returned with a saucepan of milk.

"I 'll watch that 'ere, Mis' Badger," said Sam. "Jest rake out the coals this way, an' when it begins to simmer I 'll put in the sperits, ef ye 'll gin 'em to me. 'Give strong drink ter him as is ready to perish,' the Scriptur' says. Hepsy 's got an amazin' sight o' grit in 'er, but I 'clare for 't, she 's ben up an' down nights so much lately with them

young uns thet she 's a'most clean wore out. An' I should be too, ef I didn't take a tramp now 'n' then to kind o' keep me up. Wal, ye see, the head o' the family, he hes to take car' o' himself, 'cause ye see, ef he goes down, all goes down. 'The man is the head o' the woman,' ye know," said Sam, as he shook his skillet of milk.

I could see Tina's eyes dancing with mirthfulness as Ellery Davenport answered, "I'm glad to see, Sam, that you have a proper care of your health. You are such an important member of the community, that I don't know what Oldtown would be without you!"

"Wal, now, Mr. Devenport, ye flatter me; but then everybody don't seem to think so. I don't think folks like me, as does for this one an' does for that one, an' kind o' spreads out permiskus, is appreciated allers. There 's Hepsy, she 's allers at me, a-sayin' I don't do nothin' for her, an' yet there las' night I wus up in my shirt, a-shiverin' an' a-goin' round, fust ter one and then ter 'nuther, a-hevin' on 'em up an' a-thumpin' on their backs, an' clarin' the phlegm out o' their thruts, till I wus e'en a'most fruz; and Hepsy, she lay there abed scoldin' 'cause I hed n't sawed no wood thet arternoon to keep up the fire. Lordy massy, I jest went out to dig a leetle sweet-flag root ter gin ter the boys, 'cause I wus so kind o' wore out. I don't think these 'ere women ever 'flects on men's trials. They railly don't keep count o' what we do for 'em."

"What a picture of conjugal life!" said Ellery Davenport, glancing at Tina. "Yes, Sam, it is to be confessed that the female sex are pretty exorbitant creditors. They make us pay dear for serving them."

"Jes' so, jes' so!" said Sam. "They don't know nothin' what we undergo. I don't think Hepsy keeps no sort o' count o' the nights an' nights I 've walked the floor with the baby, whishin' an' shooin' on 't, an' singin' to 't till my thrut wus sore, an' then hed to git up afore daylight to split

oven-wood, an' then right to my blacksmithin', jest to git a little money to git the meat an' meal an' suthin' comfort'ble fur dinner! An' then, ye see, there don't nothin' last, when there 's so many mouths to eat it up; an' there 't is, it 's jest roun' an' roun'. Ye git a good piece o' beef Tuesday an' pay for 't, an' by Thursday it 's all gone, an' ye hev to go to work agin! Lordy massy, this 'ere life don't seem hardly wuth hevin'. I s'pose, Mr. Devenport, you 've been among the gret folks o' th' earth, over there in King George's court? Why, they say here that you 've ben an' tuk tea with the king, with his crown on 's head! I s'pose they all goes roun' with their crowns on over there; don't they?"

"Well, no, not precisely," said Ellery Davenport. "I think they rather mitigate their splendors when they have to do with us poor republicans, so as not to bear us down altogether."

"Jes' so," said Sam, "like Moses, that put a veil over 's face 'cause th' Israelites could n't bear the glory."

"Well," said Ellery Davenport, "I 've not been struck with any particular resemblance between King George and Moses."

"The folks here 'n Oldtown, Mr. Devenport, 's amazin' curus to hear the partic'lars 'bout them grand things 't you must ha' seen; I 's a-tellin' on 'em up to store how you 'd ben with lords 'n' ladies 'n' dukes 'n' duchesses, 'n' seen all the kingdoms o' the world, an' the glory on 'em. I told 'em I did n't doubt you 'd et off 'm plates o' solid gold, an' ben in houses where the walls was all a crust o' gold 'n' diamonds 'n' precious stones, 'n' yit ye did n't seem ter be one bit lifted up nor proud, so 't yer could n't talk to common folks. I s'pose them gret fam'lies they hes as much 's fifty ur a hunderd servants, don't they?"

"Well, sometimes," said Ellery Davenport.

"Wal, now," said Sam, "I sh'd think a man 'd feel kind

o' curus, — sort o' 's ef he was keepin' a hotel, an' boardin' all the lower classes."

"It is something that way, Sam," said Ellery Davenport. "That 's one way of providing for the lower classes."

"Jest what th' Lord told th' Israelites when they would hev a king," said Sam. "Ses he, 'He 'll take yer daughters to be confectioners 'n' cooks 'n' bakers, an' he 'll take the best o' yer fields 'n' yer vineyards 'n' olive-yards, an' give 'em to his sarvints, an' he 'll take a tenth o' yer seed 'n' give 'em ter his officers, an' he 'll take yer men-sarvints 'n' yer maid-sarvints, 'n' yer goodliest young asses, an' put 'em ter his works.' "

"Striking picture of monarchical institutions, Sam," said Ellery Davenport.

"Wal, now, I tell ye what," said Sam, slowly shaking his shimmering skillet of milk, "I should n't want ter git inter that 'ere pie, unless I could be some o' the top crust. It 's jest like a pile o' sheepskins, — 's only the top un lies light. I guess th' undermost one 's squeezed putty flat."

"I 'll bet it is, Sam," said Ellery Davenport, laughing.

"Wal," said Sam, "I go for republics, but yit it 's human natur' ter kind o' like ter hold onter titles. Now over here a man likes ter be a deacon 'n' a cap'n 'n' a colonel in the milishy 'n' a sheriff 'n' a judge, 'n' all thet. Lordy massy, I don't wonder them grand English folks sticks to their grand titles, an' the people all kind o' bows down to 'em, as they did to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image."

"Why, Sam," said Ellery Davenport, "your speculations on politics are really profound."

"Wal," said Sam, "Mr. Devenport, there 's one pint I want ter consult ye 'bout, an' thet is, what the king o' England's name is. There 's Jake Marshall 'n' me, we 's

argood that pint these many times. Jake ses his name is George Rix, — R-i-x, — an' thet ef he 'd come over here, he 'd be called Mr. Rix. I ses to him, 'Why, Jake, 't ain't *Rix*, it 's Rex, an' 't ain't his name, it 's his title,' ses I, — 'cause the boys told me thet Rex was Latin 'n' meant king; but Jake 's one o' them fellers thet allers thinks he knows. Now, Mr. Devenport, I 'd like to put it down from you ter him, 'cause you 've just come from the court o' England an' you 'd know."

"Well, you may tell your friend Jake that you are quite in the right," said Ellery Davenport. "Give him my regards, and tell him he 's been mistaken."

"But you don't call the king Rex when ye speak to 'im, do yer ? " said Sam.

"Not precisely," said Ellery Davenport.

"Mis' Badger," said Sam gravely, "this 'ere milk 's come to the bile, 'n' ef you 'll be so kind 's to hand me the sperits 'n' the sugar, I 'll fix this 'ere. Hepsy likes her milk punch putty hot."

"Well, Sam," said my grandmother, as she handed him the bottle, "take an old woman's advice, and don't go stramming off another afternoon. If you 'd been steady at your blacksmithing, you might have earned enough money to buy all these things yourself, and Hepsy 'd like it a great deal better."

"I suppose it 's about the two hundred and forty-ninth time mother has told him that," said Aunt Lois, with an air of weary endurance.

"Wal, Mis' Badger," said Sam, "'all work an' no play makes Jack a dull boy,' ye know. I hes to recreate, else I gits quite wore out. Why, lordy massy, even a saw-mill hes ter stop sometimes ter be greased. 'T ain't everybody thet 's like Sphyxy Smith, but she grits and screeches all the time, jest 'cause she keeps to work without bein' 'iled. Why, she could work on, day 'n' night, these twenty years,

'n' never feel it. But, lordy massy, I gits so 'xhausted, an' hes sech a sinking 't my stomach, 'n' then I goes out 'n' kind o' *Injunin'* round, an' git flag-root 'n' wintergreen 'n' spruce boughs 'n' gensing root 'n' sarsafrass 'n' sich fur Hepsy to brew up a beer. I ain't a-wastin' my time ef I be enjoyin' myself. I say it 's a part o' what we 's made for."

"You are a true philosopher, Sam," said Ellery Davenport.

"Wal," said Sam, "I look at it this 'ere way, — ef I keep on a-grindin' and a-grindin' day 'n' night, I never shell hev nothin', but ef I takes now 'n' then an arternoon to lie roun' in the sun, I gits suthin' 's I go 'long. Lordy massy, it 's jest all the comfort I hes, kind o' watchin' the clouds 'n' the birds, 'n' kind o' forgettin' all 'bout Hepsy 'n' the children 'n' the blacksmithin'."

"Well," said Aunt Lois smartly, "I think you are forgetting all about Hepsy and the children now, and I advise you to get that milk punch home as quick as you can, if it 's going to do her any good. Come, here 's a tin pail to put it into. Cover it up, and do let the poor woman have some comfort as well as you!"

Sam received his portion in silence, and, with reluctant glances at the warm circle, went out into the night.

"I don't see how you all can bear to listen to that man's maundering!" said Aunt Lois. "He puts me out of all sort of patience. 'Head of the woman' to be sure! when Hepsy earns the most of what that family uses, except what we give 'em. And I know exactly how she feels; the poor woman is mad with shame and humiliation half the time at the charities he will accept from us."

"Oh, come, Miss Lois," said Ellery Davenport, "you must take an æsthetic view of him. Sam 's a genuine poet in his nature, and poets are always practically useless. And now Sam 's about the only person in Oldtown, that I have seen, that has the least idea that life is meant, in any way,

for enjoyment. Everybody else seems to be sword in hand, fighting against the possibility of future suffering, toiling and depriving themselves of all present pleasure, so that they may not come to want by and by. Now I 've been in countries where the whole peasantry are like Sam Lawson."

"Good gracious!" said Aunt Lois, "what a time they must have of it!"

"Well, to say the truth, there 's not much progress in such communities, but there is a great deal of clear, sheer animal enjoyment. And when trouble comes, it comes on them as it does on animals, unfeared and unforeseen, and therefore unprovided for."

"Well," said my grandmother, "you don't think that is the way for rational and immortal creatures to live?"

"Well," said Ellery Davenport, "taking into account the rational and immortal, perhaps not; but I think if we could mix the two races together it would be better. The Yankee lives almost entirely for the future, the Italian enjoys the present."

"Well, but do you think it is right to live merely to enjoy the present?" persisted Aunt Lois.

"The eternal question!" said Ellery. "After all, who knows anything about it? What *is* right, and what *is* wrong? Mere geographical accidents! What is right for the Greenlander is wrong for me; what is right for me is wrong for the Hindoo. Take the greatest saint on earth to Greenland, and feed him on train oil and candles, and you make one thing of him; put him under the equator, with the thermometer at one hundred in the shade, and you make another."

"But right is right and wrong is wrong," said Aunt Lois persistently, "after all."

"I sometimes think," said Ellery Davenport, "that right and wrong are just like color, mere accidental properties. There is no color where there 's no light, and a thing is

all sorts of colors according to the position you stand in and the hour of the day. There 's your rocking-chair in the setting sun becomes a fine crimson, and in the morning comes out dingy gray. So it is with human actions. There 's nothing so bad that you cannot see a good side to it, nothing so good that you cannot see a bad side to it. Now we think it 's shocking for our Indian tribes, some of them, to slay their old people; but I 'm not sure, if the Indian could set forth his side of the case, with all the advantages of our rhetoric, but that he would have the best of it. He does it as an act of filial devotion, you see. He loves and honors his father too much to let him go through all that horrid process of draining out life drop by drop that we think the thing to protract in our high civilization. For my part, if I were an Indian chief, I should prefer, when I came to be seventy, to be respectfully knocked on the head by my oldest son, rather than to shiver and drivel and muddle and cough my life out a dozen years more."

"But God has given his commandments to teach us what is right," said Aunt Lois. "'Honor thy father and thy mother.'"

"Precisely," said Ellery; "and my friends the Sioux would tell you that they do honor their fathers and mothers by respectfully putting them out of the way when there is no more pleasure in living. They send them to enjoy eternal youth in the hunting-grounds of the fathers, you know."

"Positively, Ellery," said Tina, "I sha'n't have this sort of heathen stuff talked any longer. Why, you put one's head all in a whirl! and you know you don't believe a word of it yourself. What 's the use of making everybody think you 're worse than you are?"

"My dear," said Ellery, "there 's nothing like hearing all that can be said on both sides of subjects. Now there 's my good grandfather made an argument on the will, that is,

and forever will remain, unanswerable, because he proves both sides of a flat contradiction perfectly; that method makes a logic-trap out of which no mortal can get his foot."

"Well," said my grandmother, "Mr. Davenport, if you 'll take an old woman's advice, you 'll take up with your grandfather's *good resolutions*, and not be wasting your strength in such talk."

"I believe there were about seventy-five — or eighty, was it? — of those resolutions," said Ellery.

"And you would n't be the worse for this world or the next if you 'd make them yourself," said my grandmother.

"Thank you, madam," said Ellery, bowing, "I 'll think of it."

"Well, come," said Tina, rising, "it 's time for us to go; and," she said, shaking her finger warningly at Ellery Davenport, "I have a private lecture for you."

"I don't doubt it," he said, with a shrug of mock apprehension; "the preaching capacities of the fair sex are something terrific. I see all that is before me."

They bade adieu, the fire was raked up in the great fireplace, all the members of the family went their several ways to bed, but Harry and I sat up in the glimmer and gloom of the old kitchen, lighted, now and then, by a sputtering jet of flame, which burst from the sticks. All round the large dark hearth the crickets were chirping as if life were the very merriest thing possible.

"Well, Harry," I said, "you see the fates have ordered it just as I feared."

"It is almost as much of a disappointment to me as it can be to you," said Harry. "And it is the more so because I cannot quite trust this man."

"I never trusted him," said I. "I always had an instinctive doubt of him."

"My doubts are not instinct," said Harry, "they are founded on things I have heard him say myself. It seems

to me that he has formed the habit of trifling with all truth, and that nothing is sacred in his eyes."

"And yet Tina loves him," said I. "I can see that she has gone to him heart and soul, and she believes in him with all her heart, and so we can only pray that he may be true to her. As for me, I can never love another. It only remains to live worthily of my love."

CHAPTER XLIV

MARRIAGE PREPARATIONS

And now for a time there was nothing thought of or talked of but marriage preparations and arrangements. Letters of congratulation came pouring in to Miss Mehitable from her Boston friends and acquaintances.

When Harry and I returned to college, we spent one day with our friends the Kitterys, and found it the one engrossing subject there, as everywhere.

Dear old Madam Kittery was dissolved in tenderness, and whenever the subject was mentioned reiterated all her good opinions of Ellery, and her delight in the engagement, and her sanguine hopes of its good influence on his spiritual prospects.

Miss Debby took the subject up energetically. Ellery Davenport was a near family connection, and it became the Kitterys to make all suitable and proper advances. She insisted upon addressing Harry by his title, notwithstanding his blushes and disclaimers.

"My dear sir," she said to him, "it appears that you are an Englishman and a subject of his Majesty; and I should not be surprised, at some future day, to hear of you in the House of Commons; and it becomes you to reflect upon your position, and what is proper in relation to yourself; and, at least under this roof, you must allow me to observe these proprieties, however much they may be disregarded elsewhere. I have already informed the servants that they are always to address you as Sir Harry, and I hope that you will not interfere with my instructions."

"Oh, certainly not," said Harry. "It will make very little difference with me."

"Now, in regard to this marriage," said Miss Debby, "as there is no church in Oldtown, and no clergyman, I have felt that it would be proper in me, as a near kinswoman to Mr. Davenport, to place the Kittery mansion at Miss Mehitable Rossiter's disposal, for the wedding."

"Well, I confess," said Harry, blushing, "I never thought but that the ceremony would be performed at home, by Parson Lothrop."

"My dear Sir Harry!" said Miss Debby, laying her hand on his arm with solemnity, "consider that your excellent parents, Sir Harry and Lady Percival, were both members of the Established Church of England, the only true Apostolic Protestant Church, — and can you imagine that their spirits, looking down from heaven, would be pleased and satisfied that their daughter should consummate the most solemn union of her life out of the Church? and in fact at the hands of a man who has never received ordination?"

It was with great difficulty that Harry kept his countenance during this solemn address. His blue eyes actually laughed, though he exercised a rigid control over the muscles of his face.

"I really had not thought about it at all, Miss Debby," he said. "I think you are exceedingly kind."

"And I'm sure," said she, "that you must see the propriety of it now that it is suggested to you. Of course, a marriage performed by Mr. Lothrop would be a legal one, so far as the civil law is concerned; but I confess I always have regarded marriage as a religious ordinance, and it would be a disagreeable thing to me to have any connections of mine united merely by a civil tie. These Congregational marriages," said Miss Debby, in a contemptuous voice, "I should think would lead to immorality. How

can people feel as if they were married that don't utter any vows themselves, and don't have any wedding-ring put on their finger? In my view, it 's not respectable; and, as Mrs. Ellery Davenport will probably be presented in the first circles of England, I desire that she should appear there with her wedding-ring on, like an honest woman. I have therefore dispatched an invitation to Miss Mehitable to bring your sister and spend the month preceding the wedding with us in Boston. It will be desirable for other reasons, as all the shopping and dressmaking and millinery work must be done in Boston. Oldtown is a highly respectable little village, but, of course, affords no advantages for the outfit of a person of quality, such as your sister is and is to be. I have had a letter from Lady Widgery this morning. She is much delighted, and sends congratulations. She always, she said, believed that you had distinguished blood in your veins when she first saw you at our house."

There was something in Miss Debby's satisfied, confiding faith in everything English and aristocratic that was vastly amusing to us. The perfect confidence she seemed to have that Sir Harry Percival, after all the sins of his youth, had entered heaven *ex officio* as a repentant and glorified baronet, a member of the only True Church, was really naïve and affecting. What would a church be good for that allowed people of quality to go to hell, like the commonalty? Sir Harry, of course, repented, and made his will in a proper manner, doubtless received the sacrament and absolution, and left all human infirmities, with his gouty toes, under the family monument, where his body reposed in sure and certain hope of a blessed and glorious resurrection. The finding of his children under such fortunate circumstances was another evidence of the good Providence who watches over the fortunes of the better classes, and does not suffer the steps of good Churchmen to slide beyond recovery.

There were so many reasons of convenience for accepting Madam Kittery's hospitable invitation, it was urged with such warmth and affectionate zeal by Madam Kittery and Miss Debby, and seconded so energetically by Ellery Davenport, to whom this arrangement would secure easy access to Tina's society during the intervening time, that it was accepted.

Harry and I were glad of it, as we should thus have more frequent opportunities of seeing her. Ellery Davenport was refurbishing and refurnishing the old country house, where Harry and Tina had spent those days of their childhood which it was now an amusement to recall, and Tina was as gladly, joyously beautiful as young womanhood can be in which, as in a transparent vase, the light of pure love and young hope has been lighted.

"You like him, Horace, don't you?" she had said to me, coaxingly, the first opportunity after the evening we had spent together. What was I to do? I did not like him, that was certain; but have you never, dear reader, been over-persuaded to think and say you liked where you did not? Have you not scolded and hushed down your own instinctive distrusts and heart-risings, blamed and schooled yourself for them, and taken yourself sharply to task, and made yourself acquiesce in somebody that was dear and necessary to some friend? So did I. I called myself selfish, unreasonable, foolish. I determined to be generous to my successful rival, and to like him. I took his frankly offered friendship, and I forced myself to be even enthusiastic in his praise. It was a sure way of making Tina's cheeks glow and her eyes look kindly on me, and she told me so often that there was no person in the world whose good opinion she had such a value for, and she was *so* glad I liked him. Would it not be perfectly abominable after this to let sneaking suspicions harbor in my breast?

Besides, if a man cannot have love, shall he therefore

throw away friendship? and may I not love with the love of chivalry, — the love that knights dedicated to queens and princesses, the love that Tasso gave to Leonora D'Este, the love that Dante gave to Beatrice, love that hopes little and asks nothing?

I was frequently in at the Kittery house in leisure hours, and when, as often happened, Tina was closeted with Ellery Davenport, I took sweet counsel with Miss Mehitable.

"We all stand outside now, Horace," she said. "I remember when *I* had the hearing of all these thousand pretty little important secrets of the hour that now must all be told in another direction. Such is life. What we want always comes to us with some pain. I wanted Tina to be well married. I would not for the world she should marry without just this sort of love; but of course it leaves me out in the cold. I would n't say this to her for the world, — poor little thing, it would break her heart."

One morning, however, I went down and found Miss Mehitable in a very excited state. She complained of a bad headache, but she had all the appearance of a person who is constantly struggling with something which she is doubtful of the expediency of uttering.

At last, just as I was going, she called me into the library. "Come here, Horace," she said; "I want to speak to you."

I went in, and she made a turn or two across the room in an agitated way, then sat down at a table, and motioned me to sit down. "Horace, my dear boy," she said, "I have never spoken to you of the deepest sorrow of my life, and yet it often seems to me as if you knew it."

"My dear Aunty," said I, for we had from childhood called her thus, "I think I do know it, — somewhat vaguely. I know about your sister."

"You know how strangely, how unaccountably she left us, and that nothing satisfactory has ever been heard from

her. I told Mr. Davenport all about her, and he promised to try to learn something of her in Europe. He was so successful in relation to Tina and Harry, I hoped he might learn something as to her; but he never seemed to. Two or three times within the last four or five years I have received letters from her, but without date, or any mark by which her position could be identified. They told me, in the vaguest and most general way, that she was well, and still loved me, but begged me to make no inquiries. They were always postmarked at Havre; but the utmost research gives no clue to her residence there."

"Well?" said I.

"Well," said Miss Mehitable, trembling in every limb, "yesterday, when Mr. Davenport and Tina had been sitting together in this room for a long time, they went out to ride. They had been playing at verse-making, or something of the kind, and there were some scattered papers on the floor, and I thought I would remove them as they were rather untidy, and among them I found" — she stopped, and panted for breath — "I found THIS!"

She handed me an envelope that had evidently been around a package of papers. It was postmarked Geneva, Switzerland, and directed to Ellery Davenport.

"Horace," said Miss Mehitable, "*that is Emily Rossiter's handwriting;* and look, the date is only two months back! What shall we do?"

There are moments when whole trains of thought go through the brain like lightning. My first emotion was, I confess, a perfectly fierce feeling of joy. Here was a clue! My suspicions had not then been unjust; the man was what Miss Debby had said, — deep, artful, and to be unmasked. In a moment I sternly rebuked myself, and thought what a wretch I was for my suspicions. The very selfish stake that I held in any such discovery imposed upon me, in my view, a double obligation to defend the

character of my rival. I so dreaded that I should be carried away that I pleaded strongly and resolutely with myself for him. Besides, what would Tina think of me if I impugned Ellery Davenport's honor for what might be, after all, an accidental resemblance in handwriting?

All these things came in one blinding flash of thought as I held the paper in my hands. Miss Mehitable sat, white and trembling, looking at me piteously.

"My dear Aunty," I said, "in a case like this we cannot take one single step without being perfectly sure. This handwriting may accidentally resemble your sister's. Are you perfectly sure that it is hers? It is a very small scrap of paper to determine by."

"Well, I can't really say," said Miss Mehitable, hesitating. "It may be that I have dwelt on this subject until I have grown nervous and my very senses deceive me. I really cannot say, Horace; that was the reason I came to you to ask what I should do."

"Let us look the matter over calmly, Aunty."

"Now," she said, nervously drawing from her pocket two or three letters and opening them before me, "here are those letters, and your head is cool and steady. I wish you would compare the writing, and tell me what to think of it."

Now the letters and the directions were in that sharp, decided English hand which so many well-educated women write, and in which personal peculiarities are lost, to a great degree, in a general style. I could not help seeing that there was a resemblance which might strike a person, — especially a person so deeply interested, and dwelling with such intentness upon a subject, as Miss Mehitable evidently was.

"My dear Aunty," said I, "I see a resemblance; but have you not known a great many ladies who wrote hands like this?"

"Yes, I must say I have," said Miss Mehitable, still

hesitating, — "only, somehow, this impressed me very strongly."

"Well," said I, "supposing that your sister has written to Ellery Davenport, may she not have intrusted him with communications under his promise of secrecy, which he was bound in honor not to reveal?"

"That may be possible," said Miss Mehitable, sighing deeply, "but oh, why should she not make a confidante of me?"

"It may be, Aunty," said I, hesitatingly, "that she is living in relations that she feels could not be justified to you."

"O Horace!" said Miss Mehitable.

"You know," I went on, "that there has been a very great shaking of old established opinions in Europe. A great many things are looked upon there as open questions, in regard to morality, which we here in New England never think of discussing. Ellery Davenport is a man of the European world, and I can easily see that there may be circumstances in which your sister would more readily resort to the friendship of such a man than to yours."

"May God help me!" said Miss Mehitable.

"My dear Aunty, suppose you find that your sister has adopted a false theory of life, sincerely and conscientiously, and under the influence of it gone astray from what we in New England think to be right. Should we not make a discrimination between errors that come from a wrong belief and the mere weakness that blindly yields to passion? Your sister's letters show great decision and strength of mind. It appears to me that she is exactly the woman to be misled by those dazzling, unsettling theories with regard to social life which now bear such sway, and are especially propagated by French literature. She may really and courageously deem herself doing right in a course that she knows she cannot defend to you and Mr. Rossiter."

"Horace, you speak out and make plain what has been the secret and dreadful fear of my life. I never have believed that Emily could have gone from us all, and stayed away so long, without the support of some attachment. And while you have been talking I have become perfectly certain that it is so; but the thought is like death to me."

"My dear Aunty," I said, "our Father above, who sees all the history of our minds, and how they work, must have a toleration and a patience that we have not with each other. He says that he will bring the blind by a way they knew not, and 'make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight;' and he adds, 'These things will I do unto them, and will not forsake them.' That has always seemed to me the most godlike passage in the Bible."

Miss Mehitable sat for a long time, leaning her head upon her hand.

"Then, Horace, you would n't advise me," she said, after a pause, "to say anything to Ellery Davenport about it?"

"Supposing," said I, "that there are communications that he is bound in honor not to reveal, of what use could be your inquiries? It can only create unpleasantness; it may make Tina feel unhappy, who is so very happy now, and probably, at best, you cannot learn anything that would satisfy you."

"Probably not," said she, sighing.

"I can hand this envelope to him," I said after a moment's thought, "this evening, if you think best, and you can see how he looks on receiving it."

"I don't know as it will be of any use," said Miss Mehitable, "but you may do it."

Accordingly, that evening, as we were all gathered in a circle around the open fire, and Tina and Ellery, seated side by side, were carrying on that sort of bantering war-

fare of wit in which they delighted, I drew this envelope from my pocket and said carelessly, "Mr. Davenport, here is a letter of yours that you dropped in the library this morning."

He was at that moment playing with a silk tassel which fluttered from Tina's wrist. He let it go, and took the envelope and looked at it carelessly.

"A letter!" said Tina, snatching it out of his hand with saucy freedom, — "dated at Geneva, and a lady's handwriting! I think I have a right to open it!"

"Do so by all means," said Ellery.

"O pshaw! there 's nothing in it," said Tina.

"Not an uncommon circumstance in a lady's letter," said Ellery.

"You saucy fellow!" said Tina.

"Why," said Ellery, "is it not the very province and privilege of the fair sex to make nothing more valuable and more agreeable than something? that 's the true secret of witchcraft."

"But I sha'n't like it," said Tina, half pouting, "if you call my letters nothing."

"Your letters, I doubt not, will be an exception to those of all the sex," said Ellery. "I really tremble, when I think how profound they will be!"

"You are making fun of me!" said she, coloring.

"I making fun of you? And what have you been doing with all your hapless lovers up to this time? Behold Nemesis arrayed in my form."

"But seriously, Ellery, I want to know whom this letter was from."

"Why don't you look at the signature?" said he.

"Well, of course you know there is no signature, but I mean what came in this paper?"

"What came in the paper," said Ellery carelessly, "was a neat little collection of Alpine flowers, that, if you are

interested in botany, I shall have the honor of showing you one of these days."

"But you have n't told me who sent them," said Tina.

"Ah, ha! we are jealous!" said he, shaking the letter at her. "What would you give to know, now? Will you be very good if I will tell you? Will you promise me for the future not to order me to do more than forty things at one time, for example?"

"I sha'n't make any promises," said Tina; "you ought to tell me!"

"What an oppressive mistress you are!" said Ellery Davenport. "I begin to sympathize with Sam Lawson, — lordy massy, you dunno nothin' what I undergo!"

"You don't get off that way," said Tina.

"Well," said Ellery Davenport, "if you must know, it 's Mrs. Breck."

"And who is she?" said Tina.

"Well, my dear, she was my boarding-house keeper at Geneva, and a very pretty, nice Englishwoman, — one that I should recommend as an example to her sex."

"Oh!" said Tina, "I don't care anything about it now."

"Of course," said Ellery. "Modest, unpretending virtue never excites any interest. I have labored under that disadvantage all my days."

The byplay between the two had brought the whole circle around the fire into a careless, laughing state. I looked across to Miss Mehitable; she was laughing with the rest. As we started to go out, Miss Mehitable followed me into the passageway. "My dear Horace," she said, "I was very absurd; it comes of being nervous and thinking of one thing too much."

CHAPTER XLV

WEDDING-BELLS

THE fourteenth of June was as bright a morning as if it had been made on purpose for a wedding-day, and of all the five thousand inauspicious possibilities which usually encumber weddings, not one fell to our share.

Tina's dress, for example, was all done two days beforehand, and fitted to a hair ; and all the invited guests had come, and were lodged in the spacious Kittery mansion.

Esther Avery was to stand as bridesmaid, with me as groomsman, and Harry, as nearest relative, was to give the bride away. The day before, I had been in and seen both ladies dressed up in the marriage finery, and we had rehearsed the situation before Harry, as clergyman, Miss Debby being present, in one of her most commanding frames of mind, to see that everything was done according to the Rubric. She surveyed Esther, while she took an approving pinch of snuff, and remarked to me, aside, "That young person, for a Congregational parson's daughter, has a surprisingly distinguished air."

Lady Widgery and Lady Lothrop, who were also in at the inspection, honored Esther with their decided approbation.

"She will be quite presentable at court," Lady Widgery remarked. "Of course Sir Harry will wish her presented."

All this *empressement* in regard to Harry's rank and title, among these venerable sisters, afforded great amusement to our quartette, and we held it a capital joke among ourselves to make Esther blush by calling her Lady Per-

cival, and to inquire of Harry about his future parliamentary prospects, his rent-rolls and tenants. In fact, when together, we were four children, and played with life much as we used to in the dear old days.

Esther, under the influence of hope and love, had bloomed out into a beautiful woman. Instead of looking like a pale image of abstract thought, she seemed like warm flesh and blood, and Ellery Davenport remarked, "What a splendid contrast her black hair and eyes will make to the golden beauty of Tina!"

All Oldtown respectability had exerted itself to be at the wedding. All, however humble, who had befriended Tina and Harry during the days of their poverty, were bidden. Polly had been long sojourning in the house, in the capacity of Miss Mehitable's maid, and assisting assiduously in the endless sewing and fine laundry work which precedes a wedding.

On this auspicious morning she came gloriously forth, rustling in a stiff changeable lutestring, her very Sunday best, and with her mind made up to enter an Episcopal church for the first time in her life. There had, in fact, occurred some slight theological skirmishes between Polly and the High Church domestics of Miss Debby's establishment, and Miss Mehitable was obliged to make stringent representations to Polly concerning the duty of sometimes repressing her testimony for truth under particular circumstances.

Polly had attended one catechising, but the shock produced upon her mind by hearing doctrines which seemed to her to have such papistical tendencies was so great that Miss Mehitable begged Miss Debby to allow her to be excused in future. Miss Debby felt that the obligations of politeness owed by a woman of quality to an invited guest in her own house might take precedence even of theological considerations. In this point of view, she regarded

Congregationalists with a well-bred, compassionate tolerance, and very willingly acceded to whatever Miss Mehitable suggested.

Harry and I had passed the night before the wedding-day at the Kittery mansion, that we might be there at the very earliest hour in the morning, to attend to all those thousand and one things that always turn up for attention at such a time.

Madam Kittery's garden commanded a distant view of the sea, and I walked among the stately alleys looking at that splendid distant view of Boston harbor, which seemed so bright and sunny, and which swooned away into the horizon with such an ineffable softness, as an image of eternal peace. As I stood there looking, I heard a light footstep behind me, and Tina came up suddenly and spattered my cheek with a dewy rose that she had just been gathering.

"You look as mournful as if it were you that is going to be married!" she said.

"Tina!" I said, "you out so early too?"

"Yes, for a wonder. The fact was, I had a bad dream, and could not sleep. I got up and looked out of my window, and saw you here, Horace, so I dressed me quickly and ran down. I feel a little bit uncanny, — and eerie, as the Scotch say, — and a little bit sad, too, about the dear old days, Horace. We have had such good times together, — first we three, and then we took Esther in, and that made four; and now, Horace, you must open the ranks a little wider and take in Ellery."

"But five is an uneven number," said I; "it leaves one out in the cold."

"O Horace! I hope you will find one worthy of you," she said. "I shall have a place in my heart all ready for her. She shall be my sister. You will write to me, won't you? Do write. I shall so want to hear of the

dear old things. Every stick and stone, every sweet-brier bush and huckleberry patch in Oldtown, will always be dear to me. And dear old precious Aunty, what ever set it into her good heart to think of taking poor little me to be her child ? and it 's too bad that I should leave her so. You know, Horace, I have a small income all my own, and that I mean to give to Aunty."

Now there were many points in this little valedictory of Tina's to which I had no mind to respond, and she looked, as she was speaking, with tears coming in her great soft eyes, altogether too loving and lovely to be a safe companion to one forbidden to hold her in his arms and kiss her, and I felt such a desperate temptation in that direction that I turned suddenly from her. "Does Mr. Davenport approve such a disposition of your income ? " said I, in a constrained voice.

"Mr. Davenport ! Mr. High and Mighty," she said, mimicking my constrained tone, " what makes you so sulky to me this morning ? "

" I am not sulky, Tina, only sad," I said.

" Come, come, Horace, don't be sad," she said coaxingly, and putting her hand through my arm. "Now just be a good boy, and walk up and down with me here a few moments, and let me tell you about things."

I submitted and let her lead me off passively. " You see, Horace," she said, " I feel for poor old Aunty. Hers seems to me such a dry, desolate life ; and I can't help feeling a sort of self-reproach when I think of it. Why should I have health and youth and strength and Ellery, and be going to see all the beauty and glory of Europe, while she sits alone at home, old and poor, and hears the rain drip off from those old lilac bushes ? Oldtown is a nice place, to be sure, but it does rain a great deal there, and she and Polly will be so lonesome without me to make fun for them. Now, Horace, you must promise me to go there as much as you can. You

must cultivate Aunty for my sake; and her friendship is worth cultivating for its own sake."

"I know it," said I; "I am fully aware of the value of her mind and character."

"You and Harry ought both to visit her," said Tina, "and write to her, and take her advice. Nothing improves a young man faster than such female friendship; it's worth that of dozens of us girls."

Tina always had a slight proclivity for sermonizing, but a chapter in Ecclesiastes, coming from little preachers with lips and eyes like hers, is generally acceptable.

"You know," said Tina, "that Aunty has some sort of a trouble on her mind."

"I know all about it," said I.

"Did she tell you?"

"Yes," said I, "after I had divined it."

"I made her tell me," said Tina. "When I came home from school, I determined I would not be treated like a child by her any longer, — that she should tell me her troubles, and let me bear them with her. I am young and full of hope, and ought to have troubles to bear. And she is worn out and weary with thinking over and over the same sad story. What a strange thing it is that that sister treats her so! I have been thinking so much about her lately, Horace; and, do you know? I had the strangest dream about her last night. I dreamed that Ellery and I were standing at the altar being married, and, all of a sudden, that lady that we saw in the closet and in the garret rose up like a ghost between us."

"Come, come," said I, "Tina, you are getting nervous. One should n't tell of one's bad dreams, and then one forgets them easier."

"Well," said Tina, "it made me sad to think that she was a young girl like me, full of hope and joy. They did n't treat her rightly over in that Farnsworth family, — Miss

Mehitable told me all about it. Oh, it was a dreadful story! they perfectly froze her heart with their dreary talk about religion. Horace, I think the most irreligious thing in the world is that way of talking which takes away our Heavenly Father, and gives only a dreadful Judge. I should not be so happy and so safe as I am now if I did not believe in a loving God."

"Tina," said I, "are you satisfied with the religious principles of Mr. Davenport?"

"I'm glad you asked me that, Horace, because Mr. Davenport is a man that is very apt to be misunderstood. Nobody really does understand him but me. He has seen so much of cant, and hypocrisy, and pretense of religion, and is so afraid of pretensions that do not mean anything, that I think he goes to the other extreme. Indeed, I have told him so. But he says he is always delighted to hear me talk on religion, and he likes to have me repeat hymns to him; and he told me the other day that he thought the Bible contained finer strains of poetry and eloquence than could be got from all other books put together. Then he has such a wonderful mind, you know. Mr. Avery said that he never saw a person that appreciated all the distinctions of the doctrines more completely than he did. He does n't quite agree with Mr. Avery, nor with anybody; but I think he is very far from being an irreligious man. I believe he thinks very seriously on all these subjects, indeed."

"I am glad of it," said I, half convinced by her fervor, more than half by the magic of her presence, and the touch of the golden curls that the wind blew against my cheek, — true Venetian curls, brown in the shade and gold in the sun. Certainly, such things as these, if not argument, incline man to be convinced of whatever a fair preacher says; and I thought it not unlikely that Ellery Davenport liked to hear her talk about religion. The conversation was interrupted by the breakfast-bell, which rung us in to an early

meal, where we found Miss Debby, brisk and crisp with business and authority, apologizing to Lady Widgery for the unusually early hour, "but, really, so much always to be done in cases like these."

Breakfast was hurried over, for I was to dress myself, and go to Mr. Davenport's house, and accompany him, as groomsman, to meet Tina and Harry at the church door.

I remember admiring Ellery Davenport, as I met him this morning, with his easy, high-bred, cordial air, and with that overflow of general benevolence which seems to fill the hearts of happy bridegrooms on the way to the altar. Jealous as I was of the love that ought to be given to the idol of my knight-errantry, I could not but own to myself that Ellery Davenport was most loyally in love.

Then I have a vision of the old North Church, with its chimes playing, and the pews around the broad aisle filled with expectant guests. The wedding had excited a great deal of attention in the upper circles of Boston. Ellery Davenport was widely known, having been a sort of fashionable meteor, appearing at intervals in the select circles of the city, with all the prestige of foreign travel and diplomatic reputation. Then the little romance of the children had got about, and had proved as sweet a morsel under the tongues of good Bostonians as such spices in the dullness of real life usually do. There was talk everywhere of the little story, and, as usual, nothing was lost in the telling; the beauty and cleverness of the children had been reported from mouth to mouth, until everybody was on tiptoe to see them.

The Oldtown people, who were used to rising at daybreak, found no difficulty in getting to Boston in season. Uncle Fliakim's almost exhausted wagon had been diligently revamped, and his harness assiduously mended, for days beforehand, during which process the good man might

have been seen flying like a meteor in an unceasing round, between the store, the blacksmith's shop, my grandfather's, and his own dwelling; and in consequence of these arduous labors, not only his wife, but Aunt Keziah and Hepsy Lawson were secured a free passage to the entertainment.

Lady Lothrop considerately offered a seat to my grandmother and Aunt Lois in her coach; but my grandmother declined the honor in favor of my mother.

"It 's all very well," said my grandmother, "and I send my blessing on 'em with all my heart; but my old husband and I are too far along to be rattling our old bones to weddings in Boston. I should n't know how to behave in their grand Episcopal church."

Aunt Lois, who, like many other good women, had an innocent love of the pomps and vanities, and my mother, to whom the scene was an unheard-of recreation, were, on the whole, not displeased that her mind had taken this turn. As to Sam Lawson, he arose before Aurora had unbarred the gates of dawn, and strode off vigorously on foot, in his best Sunday clothes, and arrived there in time to welcome Uncle Fliakim's wagon, and to tell him that "he 'd ben a-lookin' out for 'em these two hours."

So then for as much as half an hour before the wedding coaches arrived at the church door there was a goodly assemblage in the church, and, while the chimes were solemnly pealing the tune of old Wells, there were bibbing and bobbing of fashionable bonnets, and fluttering of fans, and rustling of silks, and subdued creakings of whalebone stays, and a gentle undertone of gossiping conversation in the expectant audience. Sam Lawson had mounted the organ loft, directly opposite the altar, which commanded a most distinct view of every possible transaction below, and also gave a prominent image of himself, with his lanky jaws, protruding eyes, and shackling figure, posed over all as the inspecting genius of the scene. And every once in a while

he conveyed to Jake Marshall pieces of intelligence with regard to the amount of property or private history — the horses, carriages, servants, and most secret internal belongings — of the innocent Bostonians, who were disporting themselves below, in utter ignorance of how much was known about them. But when a man gives himself seriously, for years, to the task of collecting information, thinking nothing of long tramps of twenty miles in the acquisition, never hesitating to put a question and never forgetting an answer, it is astonishing what an amount of information he may pick up. In Sam, a valuable reporter of the press has been lost forever. He was born a generation too soon, and the civilization of his time had not yet made a place for him. But not the less did he at this moment feel in himself all the responsibilities of a special reporter for Oldtown.

"Lordy massy," he said to Jake, when the chimes began to play, "how solemn that 'ere does sound!

'Life *is* the time to sarve the Lord,
The time *to* insure the gret reward.'

I ben up in the belfry askin' the ringer what Mr. Devenport 's goin' to give him for ringin' them 'ere chimes; and how much do ye think 't was? Wal, 't was jest fifty dollars, for jest this 'ere one time! an' the weddin' fee 's a-goin' t' be a hunderd guineas in a gold puss. I tell yer, Colonel Devenport 's a man as chops his mince putty fine. There 's Parson Lothrop down there; he 's got a spick span new coat an' a new wig! That 's Mis' Lothrop's scarlet Injy shawl; that 'ere cost a hunderd guineas in Injy, — her first husband gin 'er that. Lordy massy, ain't it a providence that Parson Lothrop 's married her? 'cause sence the war that 'ere s'ciety fur sendin' the Gospil to furrin parts don't send nothin' to 'em, an' the Oldtown people they don't pay nothin'. All they can raise they gin to Mr. Mordecai Rossiter, 'cause they say ef they hev to

s'port a colleague it 's all they can do, 'specially sence he 's married. Yeh see, Mordecai, he wanted to git Tiny, but he could n't come it, and so he 's tuk up with Delily Barker. The folks, some on 'em, kind o' hinted to old Parson Lothrop thet his sermons was n't so interestin' 's they might be, 'n' the Parson, ses he, 'Wal, I b'lieve the sermons 's about 's good 's the pay ; ain't they ? ' He hed 'em there. I like Parson Lothrop, — he 's a fine old figger-head, and keeps up stiff for th' honor o' the ministry. Why, folks 's gittin' so nowadays thet ministers won't be no more 'n common folks, 'n' everybody 'll hev their say to 'em jest 's they do to anybody else. Lordy massy, there 's the orgin, — goin' to hev all the glories, orgins 'n' bells 'n' everythin' ; guess the procession must ha' started. Mr. Devenport 's got another spick an' span new landau, 't he ordered over from England, special, for this 'casion, an' two prancin' white hosses ! Yeh see I got inter Bostin 'bout daybreak, an' I 's around ter his stables a-lookin' at 'em a polishin' up their huffs a little, 'n' givin' on 'em a wipe down, 'n' I asked Jenkins what he thought he gin for 'em, an' he sed he reelly should n't durst to tell me. I tell ye, he 's like Solomon, — he 's a-goin' to make gold as the stones o' the street."

And while Sam's monologue was going on, in came the bridal procession, — first, Harry, with his golden head and blue eyes, and, leaning on his arm, a cloud of ethereal gauzes and laces, out of which looked a face, pale now as a lily, with wandering curls of golden hair like little gleams of sunlight on white clouds ; then the tall, splendid figure of Ellery Davenport, his haughty blue eyes glancing all around with a triumphant assurance. Miss Mehitable hung upon his arm, pale with excitement and emotion. Then came Esther and I. As we passed up the aisle, I heard a confused murmur of whisperings and a subdued drawing in of breath, and the rest all seemed to me to be done in a

dream. I heard the words, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" and saw Harry step forth, bold, and bright, and handsome, amid the whisperings that pointed him out as the hero of a little romance. And he gave her away forever, — our darling, our heart of hearts. And then those holy, tender words, those vows so awful, those supporting prayers, all mingled as in a dream, until it was all over, and ladies, laughing and crying, were crowding around Tina, and there were kissing and congratulating and shaking of hands, and then we swept out of the church, and into the carriages, and were whirled back to the Kittery mansion, which was thrown wide open, from garret to cellar, in the very profuseness of old English hospitality.

There was a splendid lunch laid out in the parlor, with all the old silver in muster, and with all the delicacies that Boston confectioners and caterers could furnish.

Ellery Davenport had indeed tendered the services of his French cook, but Miss Debby had respectfully declined the offer.

"He may be a very good cook, Ellery; I say nothing against him. I am extremely obliged to you for your polite offer, but good English cooking is good enough for me, and I trust that whatever guests I invite will always think it good enough for them."

On that day, Aunt Lois and Aunt Keziah and my mother and Uncle Fliakim sat down in proximity to some of the very selectest families of Boston, comporting themselves, like good republican Yankees, as if they had been accustomed to that sort of thing all their lives, though secretly embarrassed by many little points of etiquette.

Tina and Ellery sat at the head of the table, and dispensed hospitalities around them with a gay and gracious freedom; and Harry, in whom the bridal dress of Esther had evidently excited distracting visions of future probabilities, was making his seat by her at dinner an oppor-

tunity, in the general clatter of conversation, to enjoy a nice little *tête-à-tête.*

Besides the brilliant company in the parlor, a long table was laid out upon the greensward at the back of the house, in the garden, where beer and ale flowed freely, and ham and bread and cheese and cake and eatables of a solid and sustaining description were dispensed to whomsoever would. The humble friends of lower degree — the particular friends of the servants, and all the numerous tribe of dependents and hangers-on, who wished to have some small share in the prosperity of the prosperous — here found ample entertainment. Here Sam Lawson might be seen, seated beside Hepsy, on a garden-seat near the festive board, gallantly pressing upon her the good things of the hour.

"Eat all ye want ter, Hepsy, — it comes free 's water; ye can hev 'wine an' milk without money 'n' without price,' as 't were. Lordy massy, 's jest what I wanted. I hed sech a stram this mornin', 'n' hain't hed nothin' but a two-cent roll, 't I bought 't the baker's. Thought I should ha' caved in 'fore they got through with the weddin'. These 'ere 'Piscopal weddin's is putty long. What d' ye think on 'em, Polly?"

"I think I like our own way the best," said Polly stanchly; "none o' your folderol, 'n' kneelin', 'n' puttin' on o' rings."

"Well," said Hepsy, with the spice of a pepper-box in her eyes, "I liked the part that said, 'With all my worldly goods, I thee endow.'"

"Thet 's putty well, when a man hes any worldly goods," said Sam; "but how about when he hes n't?"

"Then he 's no business to git married!" said Hepsy definitely.

"So I think," said Polly; "but, for my part, I don't want no man's worldly goods, ef I 've got to take him with 'em. I 'd rather work hard as I have done, and hev 'em all to myself, to do just what I please with."

"Wal, Polly," said Sam, "I dare say the men 's jest o' your mind, — none on 'em won't try very hard to git ye out on 't."

"There 's bin those thet hes, though!" said Polly; "but 't ain't wuth talkin' about, any way."

And so conversation below stairs and above proceeded gayly and briskly, until at last the parting hour came.

"Now jest all on ye step round ter the front door, an' see 'em go off in their glory. Them two white hosses is imported fresh from England, 'n' they could n't ha' cost less 'n a thousan' dollars apiece, ef they cost a cent."

"A thousand!" said Jenkins, the groom, who stood in his best clothes amid the festive throng. "Who told you that?"

"Wal," said Sam, "I thought I 'd put the figger low enough, sence ye would n't tell me perticklers. I like to be accurate 'bout these 'ere things. There they be! they 're comin' out the door now. She 's tuk off her white dress now, an' got on her travelin' dress, don't ye see? Lordy massy, what a kissin' an' a cryin'! How women allers does go on 'bout these 'ere things! There, he 's got 'er at last. See 'em goin' down the steps! ain't they a han'some couple! There, he 's handin' on 'er in. The kerridge 's lined with blue satin, 'n' never was sot in afore this mornin'. Good luck go with 'em! There they go."

And we all of us stood on the steps of the Kittery mansion, kissing hands and waving handkerchiefs, until the beloved one, the darling of our hearts, was out of sight.

CHAPTER XLVI

WEDDING AFTER-TALKS AT OLDTOWN

Wedding joys are commonly supposed to pertain especially to the two principal personages, and to be of a kind with which the world doth not intermeddle; but a wedding in such a quiet and monotonous state of existence as that of Oldtown is like a glorious sunset, which leaves a long afterglow, in which trees and rocks, farmhouses, and all the dull, commonplace landscape of real life have, for a while, a roseate hue of brightness. And then the long after-talks, the deliberate turnings and revampings, and the reënjoying, bit by bit, of every incident!

Sam Lawson was a man who knew how to make the most of this, and for a week or two he reigned triumphant in Oldtown on the strength of it. Others could relate the bare, simple facts, but Sam Lawson could give the wedding, with variations, with marginal references, and explanatory notes, and enlightening comments, that ran deep into the history of everybody present. So that even those who had been at the wedding did not know half what they had seen until Sam told them.

It was now the second evening after that auspicious event. Aunt Lois and my mother had been pressed to prolong their stay over one night after the wedding, to share the hospitalities of the Kittery mansion, and had been taken around in the Kittery carriage to see the wonders of Boston town. But prompt, on their return, Sam came in to assist them in dishing up information by the evening fireside.

"Wal, Mis' Badger," said he, "'t was gin'ally agreed, on all hands, there had n't ben no weddin' like it seen in Boston sence the time them court folks and nobility used to be there. Old Luke there, that rings the chimes, he told me he hed n't seen no sech couple go up the broad aisle o' that church. Luke, says he to me, 'I tell yew, the grander o' Boston is here to-day,' and ye 'd better b'lieve every one on 'em had on their Sunday best. There was the Boylstons, an' the Bowdoins, an' the Brattles, an' the Winthrops, an' the Bradfords, an' the Penhallows up from Portsmouth, an' the Quincys, an' the Sewells. Wal, I tell yer, there was real grit there! — folks that come in their grand kerridges I tell you! — there was such a pawin' and a stampin' o' horses and kerridges round the church as if all the army of the Assyrians was there!"

"Well, now, I 'm glad I did n't go," said my grandmother. "I 'm too old to go into any such grandeur."

"Wal, I don't see why folks hes so much 'bjections to these here 'Piscopal weddin's, neither," said Sam. "I tell yer, it 's a kind o' putty sight now; ye see I was up in the organ loft, where I could look down on the heads of all the people. Massy to us! the bunnets, an' the feathers, an' the Injy shawls, an' the purple an' fine linen, was all out on the 'casion. An' when our Harry come in with Tiny on his arm, tha' was a gineral kind o' buzz, an' folks a-risin' up all over the house to look at 'em. Her dress was yer real Injy satin, thick an' yaller, kind o' like cream. An' she had on the Pierpont pearls an' diamonds" —

"How did you know what she had on?" said Aunt Lois.

"Oh, I hes ways o' findin' out!" said Sam. "Yeh know old Gineral Pierpont, his gret-gret-grandfather, was a gineral in the British army in Injy, an' he racketed round 'mong them nabobs out there, an' got no end o' gold an' precious stones, an' these 'ere pearls an' diamonds that she wore on

her neck and in her ears hes come down in the Devenport family. Mis' Delily, Miss Deborah Kittery's maid, she told me all the partic'lars 'bout it, an' she ses there ain't no family so rich in silver and jewels, and sich, as Ellery Devenport's is, an' hes ben for generations back. His house is jest chock-full of all sorts o' graven images and queer things from Chiny an' Japan, 'cause, ye see, his ancestors they traded to Injy, an' they seem to hev got the abundance o' the Gentiles flowin' to 'em."

"I noticed those pearls on her neck," said Aunt Lois; "I never saw such pearls."

"Wal," said Sam, "Mis' Delily, she ses she 's tried 'em 'long side of a good-sized pea, an' they 're full as big. An' the earrings 's them pear-shaped pearls, ye know, with diamond nubs atop on 'em. Then there was a great pearl cross, an' the biggest kind of a diamond right in the middle on 't. Wal, Mis' Delily she told me a story 'bout them 'ere pearls," said Sam. "For my part, ef it hed ben a daughter o' mine, I 'd ruther she 'd 'a' worn suthin' on her neck that was spic an' span new. I tell yew, these 'ere old family jewels, I think sometimes they gits kind o' struck through an' through with moth an' rust, so to speak."

"I 'm sure I don't know what you mean, Sam," said Aunt Lois literally, "since we know gold can't rust, and pearls and diamonds don't hurt with any amount of keeping."

"Wal, ye see, they do say that 'ere old Gineral Pierpont was a putty hard customer; he got them 'ere pearls an' diamonds away from an Injun princess; I s'pose she thought she 'd as much right to 'em 's he hed; an' they say 't was about all she hed was her jewels, an' so nat'rally enough she cussed him for taking on 'em. Wal, dunno 's the Lord minds the cusses o' these poor old heathen critturs; but 's ben a fact, Mis' Delily says, thet them jewels hain't never brought good luck. Gineral Pierpont, he gin

'em to his fust wife, an' she did n't live but two months arter she was married. He gin 'em to his second wife, 'n' she tuck to drink and led him sech a life 't he would n't ha' cared ef she had died too; 'n' then they come down to Ellery Devenport's first wife, 'n' she went ravin' crazy the fust year arter she was married. Now all that 'ere does look a little like a cuss; don't it?"

"Oh, nonsense, Sam!" said Aunt Lois, "I don't believe there 's a word of truth in any of it! You can hatch more stories in one day than a hen can eggs in a month."

"Wal, any way," said Sam, "I like the 'Piscopal sarvice, all 'ceppin' the minister's wearin' his shirt outside; that I don't like."

"'T is n't a shirt!" said Aunt Lois indignantly.

"O lordy massy!" said Sam, "I know what they calls it. I know it 's a surplice, but it looks for all the world like a man in his shirt-sleeves; but the words is real solemn. I wondered when he asked 'em all whether they hed any objections to 't, an' told 'em to speak up ef they hed, what would happen ef anybody should speak up jest there."

"Why, of course 't would stop the wedding," said Aunt Lois, "until the thing was inquired into."

"Wal, Jake Marshall, he said thet he 'd heerd a story when he was a boy, about a weddin' in a church at Portsmouth, that was stopped jest there, 'cause, ye see, the man he hed another wife livin'. He said 't was old Colonel Penhallow. 'Mazin' rich the old Colonel was, and these 'ere rich old cocks sometimes does seem to strut round and cut up pretty much as if they hed n't heard o' no God in their parts. The Colonel he got his wife shet up in a lunatic asylum, an' then spread the word that she was dead, an' courted a gal, and come jest as near as that to marryin' of her."

"As near as what?" said Aunt Lois.

"Why, when they got to that 'ere part of the service, there was his wife, good as new. She 'd got out o' the 'sylum, and stood up there 'fore 'em all. So you see that 'ere does some good."

"I 'd rather stay in an asylum all my life than go back to that man," said Aunt Lois.

"Wal, you see she did n't," said Sam; "her friends they made him make a settlement on her, poor woman, and he cleared out t' England."

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," said my grandmother.

"Wal, how handsome that 'ere gal is that Harry 's going to marry!" continued Sam. "She did n't have on nothin' but white muslin, an' not a snip of a jewel; but she looked like a queen. Ses I to Jake, ses I, 'There goes the woman 't 'll be Lady Percival one o' these days, over in England, an' I bet ye, he 'll find lots o' family jewels for her, over there.' Mis' Delily she said she did n't doubt there would be."

"I hope," said my grandmother, "that she will have more enduring riches than that; it 's small matter about earthly jewels."

"Lordy massy, yes, Mis' Badger," said Sam, "jes' so, jes' so; now that 'ere was bein' impressed on my mind all the time. Folks oughtenter lay up their treasures on airth; I could n't help thinkin' on 't when I see Tiny a-wearin' them jewels, jest how vain an' transitory everythin' is, an' how the women 't has worn 'em afore is all turned to dust, an' lyin' in their graves. Lordy massy, these 'ere things make us realize what a transitory world we 's a-livin' in. I was tellin' Hepsy 'bout it, — she 's so kind o' worldly, Hepsy is, — seemed to make her feel so kind o' gritty to see so much wealth 'n' splendor, when we hed n't none. Ses I, 'Hepsy, there ain't no use o' wantin' worldly riches, 'cause our lives all passes away like a dream, an' a hundred years hence 't won't make no sort o' diffurnce what we 've hed, an' what we hev n't hed.' But wal, Miss Lois, *did* ye

see the kerridge ? " said Sam, returning to temporal things with renewed animation.

" I just got a glimpse of it," said Aunt Lois, " as it drove to the door."

" Lordy massy," said Sam, " I was all over that 'ere kerridge that mornin' by daylight. 'T ain't the one he had up here, — that was jest common doin's, — this 'ere is imported spic an' span new from England for the 'casion, an' all made jest 's they make 'em for the nobility. Why, 't was all quilted an' lined with blue satin, ever so grand, an' Turkey carpet under their feet, an' the springs was easy 's a rockin'-chair. That 's what they 've gone off in. Wal, lordy massy ! I don't grudge Tina nothin' ! She 's the chipperest, light-heartedest, darlin'est little creetur that ever did live, an' I hope she 'll hev good luck in all things."

A rap was heard at the kitchen door, and Polly entered. It was evident from her appearance that she was in a state of considerable agitation. She looked pale and excited, and her hands shook.

" Mis' Badger," she said to my grandmother, " Miss Rossiter wants to know 'f you won't come and set up with her to-night."

" Why, is she sick ? " said grandmother. " What 's the matter with her ? "

" She ain't very well," said Polly evasively; " she wanted Mis' Badger to spend the night with her."

" Perhaps, mother, I 'd better go over," said Aunt Lois.

" No, Miss Lois," said Polly eagerly, " Miss Rossiter don't wanter see anybody but yer mother."

" Wal, now I wanter know ! " said Sam Lawson.

" Well, you can't know everything," said Aunt Lois, " so you may want ! "

" Tell Miss Rossiter, ef I can do anythin' for 'er, I hope she 'll call on me," said Sam.

My grandmother and Polly went out together. Aunt Lois bustled about the hearth, swept it up, and then looked out into the darkness after them. What could it be?

The old clock ticked drowsily in the kitchen corner, and her knitting-needles rattled.

"What do you think it is?" said my mother timidly to Aunt Lois.

"How should I know?" said Aunt Lois sharply.

In a few moments Polly returned again.

"Miss Mehitable says she would like to see Sam Lawson."

"Oh, wal, wal, would she? Wal, I'll come!" said Sam, rising with joyful alertness. "I'm allers ready at a minute's warnin'!"

And they went out into the darkness together.

CHAPTER XLVII

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

In the creed of most story-tellers marriage is equal to translation. The mortal pair whose fortunes are traced to the foot of the altar forthwith ascend, and a cloud receives them out of our sight as the curtain falls. Faith supposes them rapt away to some unseen paradise, and every-day toil girds up its loins and with a sigh prepares to return to its delving and grubbing. But our story must follow the fortunes of our heroine beyond the prescribed limits.

It had been arranged that the wedding pair, after a sunny afternoon's drive through some of the most picturesque scenery in the neighborhood of Boston, should return at eventide to their country home, where they were to spend a short time preparatory to sailing for Europe. Even in those early days the rocky glories of Nahant and its dashing waves were known and resorted to by Bostonians, and the first part of the drive was thitherward, and Tina climbed round among the rocks, exulting like a sea-bird with Ellery Davenport ever at her side, laughing, admiring, but holding back her bold, excited footsteps, lest she should plunge over by some unguarded movement, and become a vanished dream.

So near lies the ever possible tragedy at the hour of our greatest exultation; it is but a false step, an inadvertent movement, and all that was joy can become a cruel mockery! We all know this to be so. We sometimes start and shriek when we see it to be so in the case of others, but who is the

less triumphant in his hour of possession for this gloomy shadow of possibility that forever dogs his steps?

Ellery Davenport was now in the high tide of victory. The pursuit of the hour was a success; he had captured the butterfly. In his eagerness he had trodden down and disregarded many teachings and impulses of his better nature that should have made him hesitate; but now he felt that he had her; she was his, — his alone and forever.

But already dark thoughts from the past were beginning to flutter out like ill-omened bats, and dip down on gloomy wing between him and the innocent, bright, confiding face. Tina he could see had idealized him entirely. She had invested him with all her conceptions of knighthood, honor, purity, religion, and made a creation of her own of him; and sometimes he smiled to himself, half amused and half annoyed at the very young and innocent simplicity of the matter. Nobody knew better than himself that what she dreamed he was he neither was nor meant to be, — that in fact there could not be a bitterer satire on his real self than her conceptions; but just now, with her brilliant beauty, her piquant earnestness, her perfect freshness, there was an indescribable charm about her that bewitched him.

Would it all pass away and get down to the jog-trot dustiness of ordinary married life, he wondered, and then, ought he not to have been a little more fair with her in exchange for the perfect transparence with which she threw open the whole of her past life to him? Had he not played with her as some villain might with a little child, and got away a priceless diamond for a bit of painted glass? He did not allow himself to think in that direction.

"Come, my little sea-gull," he said to her, after they had wandered and rambled over the rocks for a while, "you must come down from that perch, and we must drive on, if we mean to be at home before midnight."

"O Ellery, how glorious it is!"

"Yes, but we cannot build here three tabernacles, and so we must say, Au revoir. I will bring you here again;" and Ellery half led, half carried her in his arms back to the carriage.

"How beautiful it is!" said Tina, as they were glancing along a turfy road through the woods. The white pines were just putting out their long fingers, the new leaves of the silvery birches were twinkling in the light, the road was fringed on both sides with great patches of the blue violet, and sweet-fern and bayberry and growing green tips of young spruce and fir were exhaling a spicy perfume. "It seems as if we two alone were flying through fairy-land." His arm was around her, tightening its clasp of possession as he looked down on her.

"Yes," he said, "we two are alone in our world now; none can enter it; none can see into it; none can come between us."

Suddenly the words recalled to Tina her bad dream of the night before. She was on the point of speaking of it, but hesitated to introduce it; she felt a strange shyness in mentioning that subject.

Ellery Davenport turned the conversation upon things in foreign lands, which he would soon show her. He pictured to her the bay of Naples, the rocks of Sorrento, where the blue Mediterranean is overhung with groves of oranges, where they should have a villa some day, and live in a dream of beauty. All things fair and bright and beautiful in foreign lands were evoked, and made to come as a sort of airy pageant around them while they wound through the still, spicy pine woods.

It was past sunset, and the moon was looking white and sober through the flush of the evening sky, when they entered the grounds of their own future home.

"How different everything looks here from what it did when I was here years ago!" said Tina, — "the paths are

all cleared, and then it was one wild, dripping tangle. I remember how long we knocked at the door, and could n't make any one hear, and the old black knocker frightened me, — it was a black serpent with his tail in his mouth. I wonder if it is there yet."

"Oh, to be sure it is," said Ellery; "that is quite a fine bit of old bronze, after something in Herculaneum, I think; you know serpents were quite in vogue among the ancients."

"I should think that symbol meant eternal evil," said Tina, — "a circle is eternity, and a serpent is evil."

"You are evidently prejudiced against serpents, my love," said Ellery. "The ancients thought better of them; they were emblems of wisdom, and the ladies very appropriately wore them for bracelets and necklaces."

"I would n't have one for the world," said Tina. "I always hated them, they are so bright, and still, and sly."

"Mere prejudice," said Ellery, laughing. "I must cure it by giving you, one of these days, an emerald-green serpent for a bracelet, with ruby crest and diamond eyes; you 've no idea what pretty fellows they are. But here, you see, we are coming to the house; you can smell the roses."

"How lovely and how changed!" said Tina. "Oh, what a world of white roses over that portico, — roses everywhere, and white lilacs. It is a perfect paradise!"

"May you find it so, my little Eve," said Ellery Davenport, as the carriage stopped at the door. Ellery sprang out lightly, and, turning, took Tina in his arms and set her down in the porch.

They stood there a moment in the moonlight, and listened to the fainter patter of the horses' feet as they went down the drive.

"Come in, my little wife," said Ellery, opening the door, "and may the black serpent bring you good luck."

The house was brilliantly lighted by wax candles in massive silver candlesticks.

"Oh, how strangely altered!" said Tina, running about, and looking into the rooms with the delight of a child. "How beautiful everything is!"

The housekeeper, a respectable female, now appeared and offered her services to conduct her young mistress to her rooms. Ellery went with her, almost carrying her up the staircase on his arm. Above, as below, all was light and bright. "This room is ours," said Ellery, drawing her into that chamber which Tina remembered years before as so weirdly desolate. Now it was all radiant with hangings and furniture of blue and silver; the open windows let in branches of climbing white roses, the vases were full of lilies. The housekeeper paused a moment at the door.

"There is a lady in the little parlor below that has been waiting more than an hour to see you and madam," she said.

"A lady!" said both Tina and Ellery in tones of surprise. "Did she give her name?" said Ellery.

"She gave no name; but she said that you, sir, would know her."

"I can't imagine who it should be," said Ellery. "Perhaps, Tina, I had better go down and see while you are dressing," said Ellery.

"Indeed, that would be a pretty way to do! No, sir, I allow no private interviews," said Tina with authority, — "no, I am all ready and quite dressed enough to go down."

"Well, then, little positive," said Ellery, "be it as you will; let 's go together."

"Well, I must confess," said Tina, "I did n't look for wedding callers out here to-night; but never mind, it 's a nice little mystery to see what she wants."

They went down the staircase together, passed across the hall, and entered the little boudoir, where Tina and Harry

had spent their first night together. The door of the writing cabinet stood open, and a lady all in black, in a bonnet and cloak, stood in the doorway.

As she came forward Tina exclaimed, "O Ellery, it is she, — the lady in the closet!" and sank down pale and half fainting.

Ellery Davenport turned pale too; his cheeks, his very lips, were blanched like marble; he looked utterly thunderstruck and appalled.

"Emily!" he said. "Great God!"

"Yes, Emily!" she said, coming forward slowly and with dignity. "You did not expect to meet ME here and now, Ellery Davenport!"

There was for a moment a silence that was perfectly awful. Tina looked on without power to speak, as in a dreadful dream. The ticking of the little French mantel clock seemed like a voice of doom to her.

The lady walked close up to Ellery Davenport, drew forth a letter, and spoke in that fearfully calm way that comes from the very white-heat of passion.

"Ellery," she said, "here is your letter. You did not know me — you could not know me — if you thought, after that letter, I would accept anything from you! *I* live on your bounty! I would sooner work as a servant!"

"Ellery, Ellery!" said Tina, springing up and clasping his arm. "Oh, tell me who she is! What is she to you? Is she — is she" —

"Be quiet, my poor child," said the woman, turning to her with an air of authority. "I have no claims; I come to make none. Such as this man is, he is your husband, not mine. You believe in him; so did I, — love him; so did I. I gave up all for him, — country, home, friends, name, reputation, — for I thought him such a man that a woman might well sacrifice her whole life to him! He is the father of my child! But fear not. The world, of

course, will approve *him* and condemn *me*. They will say he did well to give up his mistress and take a wife; it's the world's morality. What woman will think the less of him, or smile the less on him, when she hears it? What woman will not feel herself too good even to touch my hand?"

"Emily," said Ellery Davenport bitterly, "if you thought I deserved this, you might, at least, have spared this poor child."

"The truth is the best foundation in married life, Ellery," she said, "and the truth you have small faculty for speaking. I do her a favor in telling it. Let her start fair from the commencement, and then there will be no more to be told. Besides," she added, "I shall not trouble you long. There," she said, putting down a jewel-case, — "there are your gifts to me, — there are your letters." Then she threw on the table a miniature set in diamonds, "There is your picture. And now God help me! Farewell."

She turned and glided swiftly from the room.

. . . . . .

Readers who remember the former part of this narrative will see at once that it was, after all, Ellery Davenport with whom, years before, Emily Rossiter had fled to France. They had resided there, and subsequently in Switzerland, and she had devoted herself to him, and to his interests, with all the single-hearted fervor of a true wife.

On her part, there was a full and conscientious belief that the choice of the individuals alone constituted a true marriage, and that the laws of human society upon this subject were an oppression which needed to be protested against.

On his part, however, the affair was a simple gratification of passion, and the principles, such as they were, were used by him as he used all principles, — simply as convenient machinery for carrying out his own purposes. Ellery

Davenport spoke his own convictions when he said that there was no subject which had not its right and its wrong side, each of them capable of being unanswerably sustained. He had played with his own mind in this manner until he had entirely obliterated conscience. He could at any time dazzle and confound his own moral sense with his own reasonings; and it was sometimes amusing, but, in the long run, tedious and vexatious to him, to find that what he maintained merely for convenience and for theory should be regarded by Emily so seriously, and with such an earnest eye to logical consequences. In short, the two came, in the course of their intimacy, precisely to the spot to which many people come who are united by an indissoluble legal tie. Slowly, and through an experience of many incidents, they had come to perceive an entire and irrepressible conflict of natures between them.

Notwithstanding that Emily had taken a course diametrically opposed to the principles of her country and her fathers, she retained largely the Puritan nature. Instances have often been seen in New England of men and women who had renounced every particle of the Puritan theology, and yet retained in their fibre and composition all the moral traits of the Puritans — their uncompromising conscientiousness, their inflexible truthfulness, and their severe logic in following the convictions of their understandings. And the fact was, that while Emily had sacrificed for Ellery Davenport her position in society, — while she had exposed herself to the very coarsest misconstructions of the commonest minds, and made herself liable to be ranked by her friends in New England among abandoned outcasts, — she was really a woman standing on too high a moral plane for Ellery Davenport to consort with her in comfort. He was ambitious, intriguing, unscrupulous, and it was an annoyance to him to be obliged to give an account of himself to her. He was tired of playing the moral hero, the

part that he assumed and acted with great success during the time of their early attachment. It annoyed him to be held to any consistency in principles. The very devotion to him which she felt regarding him, as she always did, in his higher and nobler nature, vexed and annoyed him.

Of late years he had taken long vacations from her society, in excursions to England and America. When the prospect of being ambassador to England dawned upon him, he began seriously to consider the inconvenience of being connected with a woman unpresentable in society. He dared not risk introducing her into those high circles as his wife. Moreover, he knew that it was a falsehood to which he never should gain her consent; and running along in the line of his thoughts came his recollections of Tina. When he returned to America, with the fact in his mind that she would be the acknowledged daughter of a respectable old English family, all her charms and fascinations had a double power over him. He delivered himself up to them without scruple.

He wrote immediately to a confidential friend in Switzerland, inclosing money, with authority to settle upon Emily a villa near Geneva, and a suitable income. He trusted to her pride for the rest. Never had the thought come into his head that she would return to her native country, and brave all the reproach and humiliation of such a step, rather than accept this settlement at his hands.

CHAPTER XLVIII

TINA'S SOLUTION

HARRY and I had gone back to our college room after the wedding. There we received an earnest letter from Miss Mehitable, begging us to come to her at once. It was brought by Sam Lawson, who told us that he had got up at three o'clock in the morning to start away with it.

"There 's trouble of some sort or other in that 'ere house," said Sam. "Last night I was in ter the Deacon's, and we was a-talking over the weddin', when Polly came in all sort o' flustered, and said Miss Rossiter wanted to see Mis' Badger; and your granny she went over, and did n't come home all night. She sot up with somebody, and I 'm certain 't wa'n't Miss Rossiter, 'cause I see her up tol'able spry in the mornin'; but, lordy massy, somethin' or other 's ben a-usin' on her up, for she was all wore out, and looked sort o' limpsy, as if there wa'n't no starch left in her. She sent for me last night. 'Sam,' says she, 'I want to send a note to the boys just as quick as I can, and I don't want to wait for the mail; can't you carry it?' 'Lordy massy, yes,' says I. 'I hope there ain't nothin' happened,' says I; and ye see she did n't answer me; and puttin' that with Mis' Badger's settin' there all night, it 'peared to me there was suthin', I can't make out quite what."

Harry and I lost no time in going to the stage-house, and found ourselves by noon at Miss Mehitable's door.

When we went in, we found Miss Mehitable seated in close counsel with Mr. Jonathan Rossiter. His face looked sharp, and grave, and hard; his large gray eyes had in

them a fiery, excited gleam. Spread out on the table before them were files of letters in the handwriting of which I had before had a glimpse. The brother and sister had evidently been engaged in reading them as some of them lay open under their hands.

When we came into the room, both looked up. Miss Mehitable rose, and offered her hands to us in an eager, excited way, as if she were asking something of us. The color flashed into Mr. Rossiter's cheeks, and he suddenly leaned forward over the papers and covered his face with his hands. It was a gesture of shame and humiliation infinitely touching to me.

"Horace," said Miss Mehitable, "the thing we feared has come upon us. O Horace, Horace! why could we not have known it in time?"

I divined at once. My memory, like an electric chain, flashed back over sayings and incidents of years.

"The villain!" I said.

Mr. Rossiter ground his foot on the floor with a hard, impatient movement, as if he were crushing some poisonous reptile.

"It 's well for him that *I* 'm not God," he said through his closed teeth.

Harry looked from one to the other of us in dazed and inquiring surprise. He had known in a vague way of Emily's disappearance, and of Miss Mehitable's anxieties, but it never had occurred to his mind to connect the two. In fact, our whole education had been in such a wholesome and innocent state of society, that neither of us had the foundation, in our experience or habits of thought, for the conception of anything like villainy. We were far enough from any comprehension of the melodramatic possibilities suggested in our days by that heaving and tumbling modern literature, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

Never shall I forget the shocked, incredulous expression

on Harry's face as he listened to my explanations, nor the indignation to which it gave place.

"I would sooner have seen Tina in her grave than married to such a man," he said huskily.

"O Harry!" said Miss Mehitable.

"I would!" he said, rising excitedly. "There are things that men can do that still leave hope of them; but a thing like this is final, — it is decisive."

"That is my opinion, Harry," said Mr. Rossiter. "It is a sin that leaves no place for repentance."

"We have been reading these letters," said Miss Mehitable; "they were sent to us by Tina, and they do but confirm what I always said, — that Emily fell by her higher nature. She learned, under Dr. Stern, to think and to reason boldly, even when differing from received opinion; and this hardihood of mind and opinion she soon turned upon the doctrines he taught. Then she abandoned the Bible, and felt herself free to construct her own system of morals. Then came an intimate friendship with a fascinating married man, whose domestic misfortunes made a constant demand on her sympathy; and these charming French friends of hers — who were, as far as I see, disciples of the new style of philosophy, and had come to America to live in a union with each other which was not recognized by the laws of France — all united to make her feel that she was acting heroically and virtuously in sacrificing her whole life to her lover, and disregarding what they called the tyranny of human law. In Emily's eyes, her connection had all the sacredness of marriage."

"Yes," said Mr. Rossiter, "but see now how all these infernal, fine-spun, and high-flown notions always turn out to the disadvantage of the weaker party! It is man who always takes advantage of woman in relations like these; it is she that gives all, and he that takes all; it is she risks everything, and he risks nothing. Hard as marriage

bonds bear in individual cases, it is for woman's interest that they should be as stringently maintained as the Lord himself has left them. When once they begin to be lessened, it is always the weaker party that goes to the wall!"

"But," said I, "suppose a case of confirmed and hopeless insanity on either side."

He made an impatient gesture. "Did you ever think," he said, "if men had the laws of nature in their hands, what a mess they would make of them? What treatises we should have against the cruelty of fire in *always* burning, and of water in *always* drowning! What saints and innocents has the fire tortured, and what just men made perfect has water drowned, making *no* exceptions! But who doubts that this inflexibility in natural law is after all the best thing? The laws of morals are in our hands and so reversible, and, therefore, we are always clamoring for exceptions. I think they should cut their way like those of nature, *inflexibly* and *eternally!*"

Here the sound of wheels startled us. I went to the window, and, looking through the purple spikes of the tall old lilacs, which came up in a bower around the open window, I saw Tina alighting from a carriage.

"O Aunty," I said involuntarily, "it is she. She is coming, poor child."

We heard a light fluttering motion and a footfall on the stairs, and the door opened, and in a moment Tina stood among us.

She was very pale, and there was an expression such as I never saw in her face before. There had been a shock which had driven her soul inward, from the earthly upon the spiritual and the immortal. Something deep and pathetic spoke in her eyes, as she looked around on each of us for a moment without speaking. As she met Miss Mehitable's haggard, careworn face, her lip quivered. She ran to her, threw her arms round her, and hid her face on

her shoulder, and sobbed out, "O Aunty, Aunty! I didn't think I should live to make you this trouble."

"You, darling!" said Miss Mehitable. "It is not *you* who have made it."

"I am the cause," she said. "I know that he has done dreadfully wrong. I cannot defend him, but oh! I love him still. I cannot help loving him; it is my duty to," she added. "I promised, you know, before God, 'for better, for worse;' and what I promised I must keep. I am his wife; there is no going back from that."

"I know it, darling," said Miss Mehitable, stroking her head. "You are right, and my love for you will never change."

"I am come," she said, "to see what can be done."

"NOTHING *can be done!*" spoke out the deep voice of Jonathan Rossiter. "She is lost and we disgraced beyond remedy!"

"You must not say that," Tina said, raising her head, her eyes sparkling through her tears with some of her old vivacity. "Your sister is a noble, injured woman. We must shield her and save her; there is every excuse for her."

"There is NEVER any excuse for such conduct," said Mr. Rossiter harshly.

Tina started up in her headlong, energetic fashion. "What right have you to talk so, if you call yourself a Christian?" she said. "Think a minute. WHO was it said, 'Neither do I condemn thee'? and whom did he say it to? Christ was not afraid or ashamed to say that to a poor friendless woman, though he knew his words would never pass away."

"God bless you, darling, — God bless you!" said Miss Mehitable, clasping her in her arms.

"I have read those letters," continued Tina impetuously. "He did not like me to do it, but I claimed it as

my right, and I would do it, and I can see in all a noble woman, gone astray from noble motives. I can see that she was grand and unselfish in her love, that she was perfectly self-sacrificing, and I believe it was because Jesus understood these things in the hearts of women that he uttered those blessed words. The law was against that poor woman, the doctors, the Scribes and Pharisees, all respectable people, were against her, and Christ stepped between all and her; he sent them away abashed and humbled, and spoke those lovely words to her. Oh, I shall forever adore him for it! He is my Lord and my God!"

There was a pause for a few moments, and then Tina spoke again.

"Now, Aunty, hear my plan. You, perhaps, do not believe any good of *him*, and so I will not try to make you; only I will say that he is anxious to do all he can. He has left everything in my hands. This must go no farther than us few who now know it. Your sister refused the property he tried to settle on her. It was noble to do it. I should have felt just as she did. But, dear Aunty, my fortune I always meant to settle on you, and it will be enough for you both. It will make you easy as to money, and you can live together."

"Yes, my dear," said Miss Mehitable; "but how can this be kept secret when there is the child?"

"I have thought of that, Aunty. I will take the poor little one abroad with me — children always love me. I can make her so happy, and oh, it will be such a motive to make amends to her for all this wrong. Let me see your sister, Aunty, and tell her about it."

"Dear child," said Miss Mehitable, "you can do nothing with her. All last night I thought she was dying. Since then she seems to have recovered her strength; but she neither speaks nor moves. She lies with her eyes open, but notices nothing you say to her."

"Poor darling!" said Tina. "But, Aunty, let me go to her. I am so sure that God will help me, — that God sends me to her. I must see her!"

Tina's strong impulses seemed to carry us all with her. Miss Mehitable arose, and, taking her by the hand, opened the door of a chamber on the opposite side of the hall. I looked in, and saw that it was darkened. Tina went boldly in, and closed the door. We all sat silent together. We heard her voice, at times soft and pleading; then it seemed to grow more urgent and impetuous as she spoke continuously and in tones of piercing earnestness.

After a while there were pauses of silence, and then a voice in reply.

"There," said Miss Mehitable, "Emily has begun to answer her, thank God! Anything is better than this oppressive silence. It is frightful!"

And now the sound of an earnest conversation was heard, waxing on both sides more and more ardent and passionate. Tina's voice sometimes could be distinguished in tones of the most pleading entreaty; sometimes it seemed almost like sobbing. After a while there came a great silence, broken by now and then an indistinct word; and then Tina came out, softly closing the door. Her cheeks were flushed, her hair partially disheveled, but she smiled brightly, — one of her old triumphant smiles when she had carried a point.

"I've conquered at last! I've won!" she said, almost breathless. "Oh, I prayed so that I might, and I did. She gives all up to me; she loves me. We love each other dearly. And now I'm going to take the little one with me, and by and by I will bring her back to her and I will make her so happy. You must give me the darling at once, and I will take her away with us; for we are going to sail next week. We sail sooner than I thought," she said; "but this makes it best to go at once."

Miss Mehitable rose and went out, but soon reappeared,

leading in a lovely little girl with great round, violet-blue eyes, and curls of golden hair. The likeness of Ellery Davenport was plainly impressed on her infant features.

Tina ran towards her, and stretched out her arms. "Darling," she said, "come to me."

The little one, after a moment's survey, followed that law of attraction which always drew children to Tina. She came up confidingly, and nestled her head on her shoulder.

Tina gave her her watch to play with, and the child shook it about, well pleased.

"Emily want to go ride?" said Tina, carrying her to the window and showing her the horses.

The child laughed, and stretched out her hand.

"Bring me her things, Aunty," she said. "Let there not be a moment for change of mind. I take her with me this moment."

A few moments after, Tina went lightly tripping down the stairs, and Harry and I with her, carrying the child and its little basket of clothing.

"There, put them in," she said. "And now, boys," she said, turning and offering both her hands, "good-by. I love you both dearly, and always shall."

She kissed us both, and was gone from our eyes before I awoke from the dream into which she had thrown me.

. . . . . .

"Well," said Miss Mehitable, when the sound of wheels died away, "could I have believed that anything could have made my heart so much lighter as this visit?"

"She was inspired," said Mr. Rossiter.

"Tina's great characteristic," said I. "What makes her differ from others is this capacity of inspiration. She seems sometimes to rise, in a moment, to a level above her ordinary self, and to carry all up with her!"

"And to think that such a woman has thrown herself away on such a man!" said Harry.

"I foresee a dangerous future for her," said Mr. Rossiter. "With her brilliancy, her power of attraction, with the temptations of a new and fascinating social life before her, and with only that worthless fellow for a guide, I am afraid she will not continue our Tina."

"Suppose we trust in Him who has guided her hitherto," said Harry.

"People usually consider that sort of trust a desperate resort," said Mr. Rossiter. "'May the Lord help her,' means, 'It 's all up with her.'"

"We see," said I, "that the greatest possible mortification and sorrow that could meet a young wife has only raised her into a higher plane. So let us hope for her future."

CHAPTER XLIX

WHAT CAME OF IT

The next week Mr. and Mrs. Ellery Davenport sailed for England.

I am warned by the increased quantity of manuscript which lies before me that, if I go on recounting scenes and incidents with equal minuteness, my story will transcend the limits of modern patience. Richardson might be allowed to trail off into seven volumes, and to trace all the histories of all his characters, even unto the third and fourth generations; but Richardson did not live in the days of railroad and steam, and mankind then had more leisure than now.

I am warned, too, that the departure of the principal character from the scene is a signal for general weariness through the audience, — for looking up of gloves, and putting on of shawls, and getting ready to call one's carriage.

In fact, when Harry and I had been down to see Tina off, and had stood on the shore, watching and waving our handkerchiefs, until the ship became a speck in the blue airy distance, I turned back to the world with very much the feeling that there was nothing left in it. What I had always dreamed of, hoped for, planned for, and made the object of all my endeavors, so far as this world was concerned was gone, — gone, so far as I could see, hopelessly and irredeemably; and there came over me that utter languor and want of interest in every mortal thing, which is one of the worst diseases of the mind.

But I knew that it would never do to give way to this lethargy. I needed an alterative; and so I set myself, with

all my might and soul, to learning a new language. There was an old German emigrant in Cambridge, with whom I became a pupil, and I plunged into German as into a new existence. I recommend everybody who wishes to try the waters of Lethe to study a new language, and learn to think in new forms; it is like going out of one sphere of existence into another.

Some may wonder that I do not recommend devotion for this grand alterative; but it is a fact, that, when one has to combat with the terrible lassitude produced by the sudden withdrawal of an absorbing object of affection, devotional exercises sometimes hinder more than they help. There is much in devotional religion of the same strain of softness and fervor which is akin to earthly attachments, and the one is almost sure to recall the other. What the soul wants is to be distracted for a while, — to be taken out of its old grooves of thought, and run upon entirely new ones. Religion must be sought in these moods, in its active and preceptive form, — what we may call its business character, — rather than in its sentimental and devotional one.

It had been concluded among us all that it would be expedient for Miss Mehitable to remove from Oldtown and take a residence in Boston. It was desirable, for restoring the health of Emily, that she should have more change and variety, and less minute personal attention fixed upon her, than could be the case in the little village of Oldtown. Harry and I did a great deal of house-hunting for them, and at last succeeded in securing a neat little cottage on an eminence overlooking the harbor in the outskirts of Boston.

Preparing this house for them, and helping to establish them in it, furnished employment for a good many of our leisure hours. In fact, we found that this home so near would be quite an accession to our pleasures. Miss Mehitable had always been one of that most pleasant and desir-

able kind of acquaintances that a young man can have; to wit, a cultivated, intelligent, literary female friend, competent to advise and guide one in one's scholarly career. We became greatly interested in the society of her sister. The strength and dignity of character shown by this unfortunate lady in recovering her position commanded our respect. She was never aware, and was never made aware by anything in our manner, that we were acquainted with her past history.

The advice of Tina on this subject had been faithfully followed. No one in our circle, or in Boston, except my grandmother, had any knowledge of how the case really stood. In fact, Miss Mehitable had always said that her sister had gone abroad to study in France, and her reappearance again was only noticed, among the few that inquired into it at all, as her return. Harry and I used to study French with her, both on our own account and as a means of giving her some kind of employment. On the whole, the fireside circle at the little cottage became a cheerful and pleasant retreat. Miss Mehitable had gained what she had for years been sighing for, — the opportunity to devote herself wholly to this sister. She was a person with an enthusiastic power of affection, and the friendship that arose between the two was very beautiful.

The experiences of the French Revolution, many of whose terrors she had witnessed, had had a powerful influence on the mind of Emily, in making her feel how mistaken had been those views of human progress which come from the mere unassisted reason, when it rejects the guidance of revealed religion. She was in a mood to return to the faith of her fathers, receiving it again under milder and more liberal forms. I think the friendship of Harry was of great use to her in enabling her to attain to a settled religious faith. They were peculiarly congenial to each other, and his simplicity of religious trust was a constant

corrective to the habits of thought formed by the sharp and pitiless logic of her early training.

A residence in Boston was also favorable to Emily's recovery, in giving to her what no person who has passed through such experiences can afford to be without, — an opportunity to help those poorer and more afflicted. Emily very naturally shrank from society; except the Kitterys, I think there was no family which she visited. I think she always had the feeling that she would not accept the acquaintance of any who would repudiate her were all the circumstances of her life known to them. But with the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, she felt herself at home. In their houses she was a Sister of Mercy, and the success of these sacred ministrations caused her, after a while, to be looked upon with a sort of reverence by all who knew her.

Tina proved a lively and most indefatigable correspondent. Harry and I heard from her constantly, in minute descriptions of the great gay world of London society, into which she was thrown as wife of the American minister. Her letters were like her old self, full of genius, of wit, and of humor, sparkling with descriptions and anecdotes of character, and sometimes scrawled on the edges with vivid sketches of places, or scenes, or buildings that hit her fancy. She was improving, she told us, taking lessons in drawing and music, and Ellery was making a capital French scholar of her. We could see through all her letters an evident effort to set forth everything relating to him to the best advantage; every good-natured or kindly action and all the favorable things that were said of him were put in the foreground, with even an anxious care.

To Miss Mehitable and Emily came other letters, filled with the sayings and doings of the little Emily, recording minutely all the particulars of her growth, and the incidents of the nursery, and showing that Tina, with all her going

out, found time strictly to fulfill her promises in relation to her.

"I have got the very best kind of a maid for her," she wrote, — "just as good and true as Polly is, only she is formed by the Church Catechism instead of the Cambridge Platform. But she is faithfulness itself, and Emily loves her dearly."

In this record, also, minute notice was taken of all the presents made to the child by her father, — of all his smiles and caressing words. Without ever saying a word formally in her husband's defense, Tina thus contrived, through all her letters, to produce the most favorable impression of him. He was evidently, according to her showing, proud of her beauty and her talents, and proud of the admiration which she excited in society.

For a year or two there seemed to be a real vein of happiness running through all these letters of Tina's. I spoke to Harry about it one day.

"Tina," said I, "has just that fortunate kind of constitution, buoyant as cork, that will rise to the top of the stormiest waters."

"Yes," said Harry. "With some women it would have been an entire impossibility to live happily with a man after such a disclosure, — with Esther, for example. I have never told Esther a word about it; but I know that it would give her a horror of the man that she never could recover from."

"It is not," said I, "that Tina has not strong moral perceptions; but she has this buoyant hopefulness; she believes in herself, and she believes in others. She always feels adequate to manage the most difficult circumstances. I could not help smiling that dreadful day, when she came over and found us all so distressed and discouraged, to see what a perfect confidence she had in herself and in her own power to arrange the affair, — to make Emily consent, to

make the child love her; in short, to carry out everything according to her own sweet will, just as she has always done with us all ever since we knew her."

"I always wondered," said Harry, "that, with all her pride, and all her anger, Emily did consent to let the child go."

"Why," said I, "she was languid and weak, and she was overborne by simple force of will. Tina was so positive and determined, so perfectly assured, and so warming and melting, that she carried all before her. There was n't even the physical power to resist her."

"And do you think," said Harry, "that she will hold her power over a man like Ellery Davenport?"

"Longer, perhaps, than any other kind of woman," said I, "because she has such an infinite variety about her. But, after all, you remember what Miss Debby said about him, — that he never cared long for anything that he was sure of. Restlessness and pursuit are his nature, and therefore the time may come when she will share the fate of other idols."

"I regard it," said Harry, "as the most dreadful trial to a woman's character that can possibly be, to love, as Tina loves, a man whose moral standard is so far below hers. It is bad enough to be obliged to talk down always to those who are below us in intellect and comprehension; but to be obliged to live down, all the while, to a man without conscience or moral sense is worse. I think often, 'What communion hath light with darkness?' and the only hope I can have is that she will fully find him out at last."

"And that," said I, "is a hope full of pain to her; but it seems to me likely to be realized. A man who has acted as he has done to one woman certainly never will be true to another."

Harry and I were now thrown more and more exclusively upon each other for society.

He had received his accession of fortune with as little exterior change as possible. Many in his situation would have rushed immediately over to England, and taken delight in coming openly into possession of the estate. Harry's fastidious reticence, however, hung about him even in this. It annoyed him to be an object of attention and gossip, and he felt no inclination to go alone into what seemed to him a strange country, into the midst of social manners and customs entirely different from those among which he had been brought up. He preferred to remain and pursue his course quietly, as he had begun, in the college with me; and he had taken no steps in relation to the property except to consult a lawyer in Boston.

Immediately on leaving college, it was his design to be married, and go with Esther to see what could be done in England. But I think his heart was set upon a home in America. The freedom and simplicity of life in this country were peculiarly suited to his character, and he felt a real vocation for the sacred ministry, not in the slightest degree lessened by the good fortune which had rendered him independent of it.

Two years of our college life passed away pleasantly enough in hard study, interspersed with social relaxations among the few friends nearest to us. Immediately after our graduation came Harry's marriage, — a peaceful little idyllic performance, which took us back to the mountains, and to all the traditions of our old innocent woodland life there.

After the wholesome fashion of New England clergymen, Mr. Avery had found a new mistress for the parsonage, so that Esther felt the more resigned to leaving him. When I had seen them off, however, I felt really quite alone in the world. The silent, receptive, sympathetic friend and brother of my youth was gone. But immediately came the effort to establish myself in Boston. And,

through the friendly offices of the Kitterys, I was placed in connection with some very influential lawyers, who gave me that helping hand which takes a young man up the first steps of the profession. Harry had been most generous and liberal in regard to all our family, and insisted upon it that I should share his improved fortunes. There are friends so near to us that we can take from them as from ourselves. And Harry always insisted that he could in no way so repay the kindness and care that had watched over his early years as by this assistance to me.

I received constant letters from him, and from their drift it became increasingly evident that the claims of duty upon him would lead him to make England his future home. In one of these he said: "I have always, as you know, looked forward to the ministry, and to such a kind of ministry as you have in America, where a man, for the most part, speaks to cultivated, instructed people, living in a healthy state of society, where a competence is the rule, and where there is a practical equality.

"I had no conception of life, such as I see it to be here, where there are whole races who appear born to poverty and subjection; where there are woes, and dangers, and miseries pressing on whole classes of men, which no one individual can do much to avert or alleviate. But it is to this very state of society that I feel a call to minister. I shall take orders in the Church of England, and endeavor to carry out among the poor and the suffering that simple Gospel which my mother taught me, and which, after all these years of experience, after all these theological discussions to which I have listened, remains in its perfect simplicity in my mind; namely, that every human soul on this earth has One Friend, and that Friend is Jesus Christ its Lord and Saviour.

"There is a redeeming power in being beloved, but there are many human beings who have never known what

it is to be beloved. And my theology is, once penetrate any human soul with the full belief that *God loves him*, and you save him. Such is to be my life's object and end; and, in this ministry, Esther will go with me hand in hand. Her noble beauty and gracious manners make her the darling of all our people, and she is above measure happy in the power of doing good which is thus put into her hands.

"As to England, mortal heart cannot conceive more beauty than there is here. It is lovely beyond all poets' dreams. Near to our place are some charming old ruins, and I cannot tell you the delightful hours that Esther and I have spent there. Truly, the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places.

"I have not yet seen Tina, — she is abroad traveling on the Continent. She writes to us often; but, Horace, her letters begin to have the undertone of pain in them, — her skies are certainly beginning to fade. From some sources upon which I place reliance, I hear Ellery Davenport spoken of as a daring, plausible, but unscrupulous man. He is an *intrigant* in politics, and has no domestic life in him; while Tina, however much she loves and appreciates admiration, has a perfect woman's heart. Admiration without love would never satisfy her. I can see, through all the excuses of her letters, that he is going very much one way and she another, that he has his engagements, and she hers, and that they see, really, very little of each other, and that all this makes her sad and unhappy. The fact is, I suppose, he has played with his butterfly until there is no more down on its wings, and he is on the chase after new ones. Such is my reading of poor Tina's lot."

When I took this letter to Miss Mehitable, she told me that a similar impression had long since been produced on her mind by passages which she had read in hers. Tina often spoke of the little girl as very lovely, and as her greatest earthly comfort. A little one of her own, born in

England, had died early, and her affections seemed thus to concentrate more entirely upon the child of her adoption. She described her with enthusiasm, as a child of rare beauty and talent, with capabilities of enthusiastic affection.

"Let us hope," said I, "that she does take her heart from her mother. Ellery Davenport is just one of those men that women are always wrecking themselves on, — men that have strong capabilities of passion, and very little capability of affection, — men that have no end of sentiment, and scarcely the beginning of real feeling. They make bewitching lovers, but terrible husbands."

One of the greatest solaces of my life during this period was my friendship with dear old Madam Kittery. Ever since the time when I had first opened to her my boyish heart, she had seemed to regard me with an especial tenderness, and to connect me in some manner with the image of her lost son. The assistance that she gave me in my educational career was viewed by her as a species of adoption. Her eye always brightened, and a lovely smile broke out upon her face, when I came to pass an hour with her. Time had treated her kindly; she still retained the gentle shrewdness, the love of literature, and the warm kindness which had been always charms in her. Some of my happiest hours were passed in reading to her. Chapter after chapter in her well-worn Bible needed no better commentary than the sweet brightness of her dear old face, and her occasional fervent responses. Many Sabbaths, when her increasing infirmities detained her from church, I spent in a tender, holy rest by her side. Then I would read from her prayer-book the morning service, not omitting the prayer that she loved, for the King and the royal family, and then, sitting hand in hand, we talked together of sacred things, and I often wondered to see what strength and discrimination there were in the wisdom of love, and how unerring were the decisions that she often made in practical questions.

In fact, I felt myself drawn to Madam Kittery by a closer, tenderer tie than even to my own grandmother. I had my secret remorse for this, and tried to quiet myself by saying that it was because, living in Boston, I saw Madam Kittery oftener. But, after all, is it not true that, as we grow older, the relationship of souls will make itself felt? I revered and loved my grandmother, but I never idealized her; but my attachment to Madam Kittery was a species of poetic devotion. There was a slight flavor of romance in it, such as comes with the attachments of our maturer life oftener than with those of our childhood.

Miss Debby looked on me with eyes of favor. In her own way she really was quite as much my friend as her mother. She fell into the habit of consulting me upon her business affairs, and asking my advice in a general way about the arrangements of life.

"I don't see," I said to Madam Kittery, one day, "why Miss Deborah always asks my advice; she never takes it."

"My dear," said she, with the quiet smile with which she often looked on her daughter's proceedings, "Debby wants somebody to ask advice of. When she gets it, she is settled at once as to what she don't want to do; and that 's something."

Miss Debby once came to me with a face of great perplexity.

"I don't know what to do, Horace. Our Thomas is a very valuable man, and he has always been in the family. I don't know anything how we should get along without him, but he is getting into bad ways."

"Ah," said I, "what?"

"Well, you see it all comes of this modern talk about the rights of the people. I 've instructed Thomas as faithfully as ever a woman could; but — do you believe me? — he goes to the primary meetings. I have positive, reliable information that he does."

"My dear Miss Kittery, I suppose it 's his right as a citizen."

"Oh, fiddlestick and humbug!" said Miss Debby; "and it may be my right to turn him out of my service."

"And would not that, after all, be more harm to you than to him?" suggested I.

Miss Debby swept up the hearth briskly, tapped on her snuff-box, and finally said she had forgotten her handkerchief, and left the room.

Old Madam Kittery laughed a quiet laugh. "Poor Debby," she said, "she 'll have to come to it; the world will go on."

Thomas kept his situation for some years longer, till, having bought a snug place, and made some favorable investments, he at last announced to Miss Debby that, having been appointed constable, with a commission from the governor, his official duties would not allow of his continuance in her service.

CHAPTER L

THE LAST CHAPTER

It was eight years after Tina left us on the wharf in Boston when I met her again. Ellery Davenport had returned to this country, and taken a house in Boston. I was then a lawyer established there in successful business.

Ellery Davenport met me with open-handed cordiality, and Tina with warm sisterly affection; and their house became one of my most frequent visiting-places. Knowing Tina by a species of divination, as I always had, it was easy for me to see through all those sacred little hypocrisies by which good women instinctively plead and intercede for husbands whom they themselves have found out. Michelet says, somewhere, that "in marriage the maternal feeling becomes always the strongest in woman, and in time it is the motherly feeling with which she regards her husband." She cares for him, watches over him, with the indefatigable tenderness which a mother gives to a son.

It was easy to see that Tina's affection for her husband was no longer a blind, triumphant adoration for an idealized hero, nor the confiding dependence of a happy wife, but the careworn anxiety of one who constantly seeks to guide and to restrain. And I was not long in seeing the cause of this anxiety.

Ellery Davenport was smitten with that direst curse, which, like the madness inflicted on the heroes of some of the Greek tragedies, might seem to be the vengeance of some incensed divinity. He was going down that dark and slippery road, up which so few return. We were all fully

aware that at many times our Tina had all the ghastly horrors of dealing with a madman. Even when he was himself again, and sought, by vows, promises, and illusive good resolutions, to efface the memory of the past, and give security for the future, there was no rest for Tina. In her dear eyes I could read always that sense of overhanging dread, that helpless watchfulness, which one may see in the eyes of so many poor women in our modern life, whose days are haunted by a fear they dare not express, and who must smile, and look gay, and seem confiding, when their very souls are failing them for fear. Still these seasons of madness did not seem for a while to impair the vigor of Ellery Davenport's mind, nor the feverish intensity of his ambition. He was absorbed in political life, in a wild, daring, unprincipled way, and made frequent occasions to leave Tina alone in Boston, while he traveled around the country, pursuing his intrigues. In one of these absences, it was his fate at last to fall in a political duel.

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Ten years after the gay and brilliant scene in Christ Church, some of those who were present as wedding guests were again convened to tender the last offices to the brilliant and popular Ellery Davenport. Among the mourners at the grave, two women who had loved him truly stood arm in arm.

After his death, it seemed, by the general consent of all, the kindest thing that could be done for him, to suffer the veil of silence to fall over his memory.

. . . . . .

Two years after that, one calm, lovely October morning, a quiet circle of friends stood around the altar of the old church, when Tina and I were married. Our wedding journey was a visit to Harry and Esther in England. Since then the years have come and gone softly.

Ellery Davenport now seems to us as a distant dream of

another life, recalled chiefly by the beauty of his daughter, whose growing loveliness is the principal ornament of our home.

Miss Mehitable and Emily form one circle with us. Nor does the youthful Emily know why she is so very dear to the saintly woman whose prayers and teachings are such a benediction in our family.

. . . . . .

Not long since we spent a summer vacation at Oldtown, to explore once more the old scenes, and to show to young Master Harry and Miss Tina the places that their parents had told them of. Many changes have taken place in the old homestead. The serene old head of my grandfather has been laid beneath the green sod of the burying-ground; and my mother, shortly after, was laid by him.

Old Parson Lothrop continued for some years, with his antique dress and his antique manners, respected in Oldtown as the shadowy minister of the past; while his colleague, Mr. Mordecai Rossiter, edified his congregation with the sharpest and most stringent new-school Calvinism. To the last, Dr. Lothrop remained faithful to his Arminian views, and regarded the spread of the contrary doctrines, as a decaying old minister is apt to, as a personal reflection upon himself. In his last illness, which was very distressing, he was visited by a zealous Calvinistic brother from a neighboring town, who, on the strength of being a family connection, thought it his duty to go over and make one last effort to revive the orthodoxy of his venerable friend. Dr. Lothrop received him politely, and with his usual gentlemanly decorum remained for a long time in silence listening to his somewhat protracted arguments and statements. As he gave no reply, his friend at last said to him, "Dr. Lothrop, perhaps you are weak, and this conversation disturbs you?"

"I should be weak indeed if I allowed such things as

you have been saying to disturb me," replied the stanch old doctor.

"He died like a philosopher, my dear," said Lady Lothrop to me, "just as he always lived."

My grandmother, during the last part of her life, was totally blind. One would have thought that a person of her extreme activity would have been restless and wretched under this deprivation; but in her case blindness appeared to be indeed what Milton expressed it as being, "an overshadowing of the wings of the Almighty." Every earthly care was hushed, and her mind turned inward, in constant meditation upon those great religious truths which had fed her life for so many years.

Aunt Lois we found really quite lovely. There is a class of women who are like winter apples, — all their youth they are crabbed and hard, but at the further end of life they are full of softness and refreshment. The wrinkles had really almost smoothed themselves out in Aunt Lois's face, and our children found in her the most indulgent and painstaking of aunties, ready to run, and wait, and tend, and fetch, and carry, and willing to put everything in the house at their disposal. In fact, the young gentleman and lady found the old homestead such very free and easy ground that they announced to us that they preferred altogether staying there to being in Boston, especially as they had the barn to romp in.

One Saturday afternoon, Tina and I drove over to Needmore with a view to having one more gossip with Sam Lawson. Hepsy, it appears, had departed this life, and Sam had gone over to live with a son of his in Needmore. We found him roosting placidly in the porch on the sunny side of the house.

"Why, lordy massy, bless your soul an' body, ef that ain't Horace Holyoke!" he said, when he recognized who I was.

"An' this 'ere 's your wife, is it? Wal, wal, how this 'ere world does turn round! Wal, now, who would ha' thought it? Here you be, and Tiny with you. Wal, wal!"

"Yes," said I, "here we are."

"Wal, now, jest sit down," said Sam, motioning us to a seat in the porch. "I was jest kind o' 'flectin' out here in the sun; ben a-readin' in the Missionary Herald; they 've ben a-sendin' missionaries to Otawhity, an' they say that there ain't no winter there, an' the bread jest grows on the trees, so 't they don't hev to make none, an' there ain't no wood-piles nor splittin' wood, nor nothin' o' that sort goin' on, an' folks don't need no clothes to speak on. Now, I 's jest thinkin' that 'ere 's jest the country to suit me. I wonder, now, ef they could n't find suthin' for me to do out there. I could shoe the hosses, ef they hed any, and I could teach the natives their catechise, and kind o' help round gin'ally. These 'ere winters gits so cold here I 'm e'en a'most crooked up with the rheumatiz" —

"Why, Sam," said Tina, "where is Hepsy?"

"Law, now, hain't ye heerd? Why, Hepsy she 's been dead, wal, let me see, 't was three year the fourteenth o' last May when Hepsy died, but she was clear wore out afore she died. Wal, jest half on her was clear paralyzed, poor crittur; she could n't speak a word; that 'ere was a gret trial to her. I don't think she was resigned under it. Hepsy hed an awful sight o' grit. I used to talk to Hepsy, an' talk, an' try to set things afore her in the best way I could, so 's to git 'er into a better state o' mind. D' you b'lieve, one day when I 'd ben a-talkin' to her, she kind o' made a motion to me with her eye, an' when I went up to 'er, what d' you think? why, she jest tuk and BIT me! she did so!"

"Sam," said Tina, "I sympathize with Hepsy. I believe if I had to be talked to an hour, and could n't answer, I should bite."

"Jes' so, jes' so," said Sam. "I 'spex 't is so. You see, women must talk, there 's where 't is. Wal, now, don't ye remember that Miss Bell, — Miss Miry Bell? She was of a good family in Boston. They used to board her out to Oldtown, 'cause she was 's crazy 's a loon. They jest let 'er go 'bout, 'cause she did n't hurt nobody, but massy, her tongue used ter run 's ef 't was hung in the middle and run both ends. Ye really could n't hear yourself think when she was round. Wal, she was a-visitin' Parson Lothrop, an' ses he, 'Miss Bell, do pray see ef you can't be still a minute.' 'Lord bless ye, Dr. Lothrop, I can't stop talking!' ses she. 'Wal,' ses he, 'you jest take a mouthful o' water an' hold in your mouth, an' then mebbee ye ken stop.' Wal, she took the water, an' she sot still a minute or two, an' it kind o' worked on 'er so 't she jumped up an' twitched off Dr. Lothrop's wig an' spun it right acrost the room inter the fireplace. 'Bless me! Miss Bell,' ses he, 'spit out yer water an' talk, ef ye must!' I 've offun thought on 't," said Sam. "I s'pose Hepsy 's felt a good 'eal so. Wal, poor soul, she 's gone to 'er rest. We 're all on us goin', one arter another. Yer grandther 's gone, an' yer mother, an' Parson Lothrop, he 's gone, an' Lady Lothrop, she 's kind o' solitary. I went over to see 'er last week, an' ses she to me, 'Sam, I dunno nothin' what I shell do with my hosses. I feed 'em well, an' they ain't worked hardly any, an' yet they act so 't I 'm 'most afeard to drive out with 'em.' I 'm thinkin' 't would be a good thing ef she 'd give up that 'ere place o' hern, an' go an' live in Boston with her sister."

"Well, Sam," said Tina, "what has become of Old Crab Smith? Is he alive yet?"

"Law, yis, he 's creepin' round here yit; but the old woman, she 's dead," said Sam. "I tell you she 's a-hevin' her turn o' hectorin' him now, 'cause she keeps appearin' to him, an' scares the old critter 'most to death."

"Appears to him?" said I. "Why, what do you mean, Sam?"

"Wal, jest as true 's you live an' breathe, she does 'pear to him," said Sam. "Why, 't was only last week my son Luke an' I, we was a-settin' by the fire here, an' I was a-holdin' a skein o' yarn for Malviny to wind (Malviny, she 's Luke's wife), when who should come in but Old Crab, head first, lookin' so scart an' white about the gills thet Luke, ses he, 'Why, Mistur Smith, what ails ye?' ses he. Wal, the critter was so scared 't he could n't speak, he jest set down in the chair, an' he shuk so 't he shuk the chair, an' his teeth, they chattered, an' 't was a long time 'fore they could git it out on him. But come to, he told us, 't was a bright moonlight night, an' he was comin' 'long down by the Stone pastur, when all of a suddin he looks up an' there was his wife walkin' right 'long-side on him, — he ses he never see nothin' plainer in his life than he see the old woman, jest in her short gown an' petticut 't she allers wore, with her gold beads round her neck, an' a cap on with a black ribbon round it, an' there she kep' a-walkin' right 'long-side of 'im, her elbow a-touchin' hisn, all 'long the road, an' when he walked faster, she walked faster, an' when he walked slower, she walked slower, an' her eyes was sot, an' fixed on him, but she did n't speak no word, an' he did n't darse to speak to her. Finally, he ses he gin a dreadful yell an' run with all his might, an' our house was the very fust place he tumbled inter. Lordy massy, wal, I could n't help thinkin' 't sarved him right. I told Sol 'bout it, last town-meetin' day, an' Sol, I thought he 'd ha' split his sides. Sol said he did n't know 's the old woman had so much sperit. 'Lordy massy,' ses he, 'ef she don't do nothin' more 'n take a walk 'long-side on him now an' then, why, I say, let 'er rip, — sarves him right.'"

"Well," said Tina, "I 'm glad to hear about Old Sol; how is he?"

"Oh, Sol? Wal, he 's doin' fustrate. He married Deacon 'Bijah Smith's darter, an' he 's got a good farm of his own, an' boys bigger 'n you be, considerable."

"Well," said Tina, "how is Miss Asphyxia?"

"Wal, Sol told me 't she 'd got a cancer or suthin' or other the matter with 'er; but the old gal, she jest sets her teeth hard, and goes on a-workin'. She won't have no doctor, nor nothin' done for 'er, an' I expect bimeby she 'll die, a-standin' up in the harness."

"Poor old creature! I wonder, Horace, if it would do any good for me to go and see her. Has she a soul, I wonder, or is she nothing but a 'working machine'?"

"Wal, I dunno," said Sam. "This 'ere world is cur'us. When we git to thinkin' about it, we think ef we 'd ha' had the makin' on 't, things would ha' ben made someways diffurnt from what they be. But then things *is* just *as* they is, an' we can't help it. Sometimes I think," said Sam, embracing his knee profoundly, "an' then agin I dunno. — There 's all sorts o' folks hes to be in this 'ere world, an' I s'pose the Lord knows what he wants 'em fur; but I 'm sure I don't. I kind o' hope the Lord 'll fetch everybody out 'bout right some o' these 'ere times. He ain't got nothin' else to do, an' it 's his lookout, an' not ourn, what comes of 'em all. — But I *should* like to go to Otawhity, an' ef you see any o' these missionary folks, Horace, I wish you 'd speak to 'em about it."

OLDTOWN FIRESIDE STORIES

I

THE GHOST IN THE MILL

"Come, Sam, tell us a story," said I, as Harry and I crept to his knees, in the glow of the bright evening firelight; while Aunt Lois was busily rattling the tea-things, and grandmamma, at the other end of the fireplace, was quietly setting the heel of a blue-mixed yarn stocking.

In those days we had no magazines and daily papers, each reeling off a serial story. Once a week, "The Columbian Centinel" came from Boston with its slender stock of news and editorial; but all the multiform devices — pictorial, narrative, and poetical — which keep the mind of the present generation ablaze with excitement had not then even an existence. There was no theatre, no opera; there were in Oldtown no parties or balls, except, perhaps, the annual election, or Thanksgiving festival; and when winter came, and the sun went down at half past four o'clock, and left the long, dark hours of evening to be provided for, the necessity of amusement became urgent. Hence, in those days, chimney-corner story-telling became an art and an accomplishment. Society then was full of traditions and narratives which had all the uncertain glow and shifting mystery of the firelit hearth upon them. They were told to sympathetic audiences, by the rising and falling light of the solemn embers, with the hearth-crickets filling

up every pause. Then the aged told their stories to the young, — tales of early life; tales of war and adventure, of forest days, of Indian captivities and escapes, of bears and wildcats and panthers, of rattlesnakes, of witches and wizards, and strange and wonderful dreams and appearances and providences.

In those days of early Massachusetts, faith and credence were in the very air. Two thirds of New England was then dark, unbroken forests, through whose tangled paths the mysterious winter wind groaned and shrieked and howled with weird noises and unaccountable clamors. Along the iron-bound shore, the stormful Atlantic raved and thundered and dashed its moaning waters, as if to deaden and deafen any voice that might tell of the settled life of the old civilized world, and shut us forever into the wilderness. A good story-teller, in those days, was always sure of a warm seat at the hearthstone and the delighted homage of children; and in all Oldtown there was no better story-teller than Sam Lawson.

"Do, do tell us a story," said Harry, pressing upon him, and opening very wide blue eyes, in which undoubting faith shone as in a mirror; "and let it be something strange, and different from common."

"Wal, I know lots o' strange things," said Sam, looking mysteriously into the fire. "Why, I know things, that ef I should tell, — why, people might say they wa'n't so; but then they *is* so for all that."

"Oh, do, do tell us!"

"Why, I should scare ye to death, mebbe," said Sam doubtingly.

"Oh, pooh! no, you would n't," we both burst out at once.

But Sam was possessed by a reticent spirit, and loved dearly to be wooed and importuned; and so he only took up the great kitchen tongs, and smote on the hickory fore-

stick, when it flew apart in the middle, and scattered a shower of clear bright coals all over the hearth.

"Mercy on us, Sam Lawson!" said Aunt Lois in an indignant voice, spinning round from her dish-washing.

"Don't you worry a grain, Miss Lois," said Sam composedly. "I see that 'ere stick was e'en a'most in two, and I thought I 'd jest settle it. I 'll sweep up the coals now," he added, vigorously applying a turkey-wing to the purpose, as he knelt on the hearth, his spare, lean figure glowing in the blaze of the firelight, and getting quite flushed with exertion.

"There, now!" he said, when he had brushed over and under and between the fire-irons, and pursued the retreating ashes so far into the red, fiery citadel that his finger-ends were burning and tingling, "that 'ere 's done now as well as Hepsy herself could 'a' done it. I allers sweeps up the haarth: I think it 's part o' the man's bisness when he makes the fire. But Hepsy 's so used to seein' me a-doin' on 't, that she don't see no kind o' merit in 't. It 's just as Parson Lothrop said in his sermon, — folks allers overlook their common marcies" —

"But come, Sam, that story," said Harry and I coaxingly, pressing upon him, and pulling him down into his seat in the corner.

"Lordy massy, these 'ere young uns!" said Sam. "There 's never no contentin' on 'em: ye tell 'em one story, and they jest swallows it as a dog does a gob o' meat; and they 're all ready for another. What do ye want to hear now?"

Now, the fact was, that Sam's stories had been told us so often that they were all arranged and ticketed in our minds. We knew every word in them, and could set him right if he varied a hair from the usual track; and still the interest in them was unabated. Still we shivered, and

clung to his knee, at the mysterious parts, and felt gentle, cold chills run down our spines at appropriate places. We were always in the most receptive and sympathetic condition. To-night, in particular, was one of those thundering stormy ones, when the winds appeared to be holding a perfect mad carnival over my grandfather's house. They yelled and squealed round the corners; they collected in troops, and came tumbling and roaring down chimney; they shook and rattled the buttery door and the sink-room door and the cellar door and the chamber door, with a constant undertone of squeak and clatter, as if at every door were a cold, discontented spirit, tired of the chill outside, and longing for the warmth and comfort within.

"Wal, boys," said Sam confidentially, "what 'll ye have?"

"Tell us 'Come down, come down!'" we both shouted with one voice. This was, in our mind, an "A No. 1" among Sam's stories.

"Ye mus' n't be frightened now," said Sam paternally.

"Oh, no! we are n't frightened *ever*," said we both in one breath.

"Not when ye go down the cellar arter cider?" said Sam with severe scrutiny. "Ef ye should be down cellar, and the candle should go out, now?"

"I ain't," said I, — "I ain't afraid of anything. I never knew what it was to be afraid in my life."

"Wal, then," said Sam, "I 'll tell ye. This 'ere 's what Cap'n Eb Sawin told me when I was a boy about your bigness, I reckon.

"Cap'n Eb Sawin was a most respectable man. Your gran'ther knew him very well; and he was a deacon in the church in Dedham afore he died. He was at Lexington when the fust gun was fired agin the British. He was a dreffle smart man, Cap'n Eb was, and driv team a good many years atween here and Boston. He married Lois

Peabody, that was cousin to your gran'ther then. Lois was a rael sensible woman; and I've heard her tell the story as he told her, and it was jest as he told it to me, — jest exactly; and I shall never forget it if I live to be nine hundred years old, like Mathuselah.

"Ye see, along back in them times, there used to be a fellow come round these 'ere parts, spring and fall, a-peddlin' goods, with his pack on his back; and his name was Jehiel Lommedieu. Nobody rightly knew where he come from. He was n't much of a talker; but the women rather liked him, and kind o' liked to have him round. Women will like some fellows, when men can't see no sort o' reason why they should; and they liked this 'ere Lommedieu, though he was kind o' mournful and thin and shad-bellied, and had n't nothin' to say for himself. But it got to be so, that the women would count and calculate so many weeks afore 't was time for Lommedieu to be along; and they 'd make up gingersnaps and preserves and pies, and make him stay to tea at the houses, and feed him up on the best there was: and the story went round that he was a-courtin' Phebe Ann Parker, or Phebe Ann was a-courtin' him, — folks did n't rightly know which. Wal, all of a sudden, Lommedieu stopped comin' round; and nobody knew why, — only jest he did n't come. It turned out that Phebe Ann Parker had got a letter from him, sayin' he 'd be along afore Thanksgiving; but he did n't come, neither afore nor at Thanksgiving time, nor arter, nor next spring; and finally the women they gin up lookin' for him. Some said he was dead; some said he was gone to Canada; and some said he hed gone over to the old country.

"Wal, as to Phebe Ann, she acted like a gal o' sense, and married 'Bijah Moss, and thought no more 'bout it. She took the right view on 't, and said she was sartin that all things was ordered out for the best; and it was jest as

well folks could n't always have their own way. And so, in time, Lommedieu was gone out o' folks's minds, much as a last year's apple blossom.

"It 's relly affectin' to think how little these 'ere folks is missed that 's so much sot by. There ain't nobody, ef they 's ever so important, but what the world gets to goin' on without 'em, pretty much as it did with 'em, though there 's some little flurry at fust. Wal, the last thing that was in anybody's mind was that they ever should hear from Lommedieu ag'in. But there ain't nothin' but what has its time o' turnin' up; and it seems his turn was to come.

"Wal, ye see, 't was the 19th o' March, when Cap'n Eb Sawin started with a team for Boston. That day there come on about the biggest snowstorm that there 'd been in them parts sence the oldest man could remember. 'T was this 'ere fine, siftin' snow, that drives in your face like needles, with a wind to cut your nose off: it made teamin' pretty tedious work. Cap'n Eb was about the toughest man in them parts. He 'd spent days in the woods a-loggin', and he 'd been up to the deestrict o' Maine a-lumberin', and was about up to any sort o' thing a man gen'ally could be up to; but these 'ere March winds sometimes does set on a fellow so that neither natur' nor grace can stan' 'em. The cap'n used to say he could stan' any wind that blew one way 't time for five minutes; but come to winds that blew all four p'ints at the same minit, — why, they flustered him.

"Wal, that was the sort o' weather it was all day; and by sundown Cap'n Eb he got clean bewildered, so that he lost his road; and when night came on he did n't know nothin' where he was. Ye see the country was all under drift, and the air so thick with snow that he could n't see a foot afore him; and the fact was, he got off the Boston road without knowin' it, and came out at a pair o' bars nigh upon Sherburne, where old Cack Sparrock's mill is.

"Your gran'ther used to know old Cack, boys. He was a drefful drinkin' old crittur, that lived there all alone in the woods by himself a-tendin' saw and grist mill. He wa'n't allers jest what he was then. Time was that Cack was a pretty consid'ably likely young man, and his wife was a very respectable woman, — Deacon Amos Petengall's darter from Sherburne.

"But ye see, the year arter his wife died, Cack he gin up goin' to meetin' Sundays, and, all the tithing-men and selectmen could do, they could n't get him out to meetin'; and, when a man neglects means o' grace and sanctuary privileges, there ain't no sayin' *what* he 'll do next. Why, boys, jist think on 't! — an immortal critter lyin' round loose all day Sunday, and not puttin' on so much as a clean shirt, when all 'spectable folks has on their best close, and is to meetin' worshipin' the Lord! What can you 'spect to come of it, when he lies idlin' round in his old week-day close, fishing, or some sich, but what the Devil should be arter him at last, as he was arter old Cack?"

Here Sam winked impressively to my grandfather in the opposite corner, to call his attention to the moral which he was interweaving with his narrative.

"Wal, ye see, Cap'n Eb he told me, that when he come to them bars and looked up, and saw the dark a-comin' down, and the storm a-thickenin' up, he felt that things was gettin' pretty consid'able serious. There was a dark piece o' woods on ahead of him inside the bars; and he knew, come to get in there, the light would give out clean. So he jest thought he 'd take the hoss out o' the team, and go ahead a little, and see where he was. So he driv his oxen up agin the fence, and took out the hoss, and got on him, and pushed along through the woods, not rightly knowin' where he was goin'.

"Wal, afore long he see a light through the trees; and, sure enough, he come out to Cack Sparrock's old mill.

"It was a pretty consid'able gloomy sort of a place, that 'ere old mill was. There was a great fall of water that come rushin' down the rocks, and fell in a deep pool; and it sounded sort o' wild and lonesome: but Cap'n Eb he knocked on the door with his whip-handle, and got in.

"There, to be sure, sot old Cack beside a great blazin' fire, with his rum-jug at his elbow. He was a dreffful fellow to drink, Cack was! For all that, there was some good in him, for he was pleasant-spoken and 'bliging; and he made the cap'n welcome.

"'Ye see, Cack,' said Cap'n Eb, 'I 'm off my road, and got snowed up down by your bars,' says he.

"'Want ter know!' says Cack. 'Calculate you 'll jest have to camp down here till mornin',' says he.

"Wal, so old Cack he got out his tin lantern, and went with Cap'n Eb back to the bars to help him fetch along his critters. He told him he could put 'em under the mill-shed. So they got the critters up to the shed, and got the cart under; and by that time the storm was awful.

"But Cack he made a great roarin' fire, 'cause, ye see, Cack allers had slab-wood a plenty from his mill; and a roarin' fire is jest so much company. It sort o' keeps a fellow's spirits up, a good fire does. So Cack he sot on his old teakettle, and made a swingeing lot o' toddy; and he and Cap'n Eb were havin' a tol'able comfortable time there. Cack was a pretty good hand to tell stories; and Cap'n Eb wa'n't no way backward in that line, and kep' up his end pretty well: and pretty soon they was a-roarin' and haw-hawin' inside about as loud as the storm outside; when all of a sudden, 'bout midnight, there come a loud rap on the door.

"'Lordy massy! what 's that?' says Cack. Folks is rather startled allers to be checked up sudden when they are a-carryin' on and laughin'; and it was such an awful blowy night, it was a little scary to have a rap on the door.

"Wal, they waited a minit, and did n't hear nothin' but the wind a-screechin' round the chimbley; and old Cack was jest goin' on with his story, when the rap come ag'in, harder 'n ever, as if it 'd shook the door open.

"'Wal,' says old Cack, 'if 't is the Devil, we 'd jest as good 's open, and have it out with him to onct,' says he; and so he got up and opened the door, and, sure enough, there was old Ketury there. Expect you 've heard your grandma tell about old Ketury. She used to come to meetin's sometimes, and her husband was one o' the prayin' Indians; but Ketury was one of the rael wild sort, and you could n't no more convert her than you could convert a wildcat or a painter [panther]. Lordy massy! Ketury used to come to meetin', and sit there on them Indian benches; and when the second bell was a-tollin', and when Parson Lothrop and his wife was comin' up the broad aisle, and everybody in the house riz up and stood, Ketury would sit there, and look at 'em out o' the corner o' her eyes; and folks used to say she rattled them necklaces o' rattlesnakes' tails and wildcat teeth, and sich like heathen trumpery, and looked for all the world as if the spirit of the old Sarpent himself was in her. I 've seen her sit and look at Lady Lothrop out o' the corner o' her eyes; and her old brown baggy neck would kind o' twist and work; and her eyes they looked so, that 't was enough to scare a body. For all the world, she looked jest as if she was a-workin' up to spring at her. Lady Lothrop was jest as kind to Ketury as she always was to every poor critter. She 'd bow and smile as gracious to her when meetin' was over, and she come down the aisle, passin' out o' meetin'; but Ketury never took no notice. Ye see, Ketury's father was one o' them great powwows down to Martha's Vineyard; and people used to say she was set apart, when she was a child, to the sarvice o' the Devil: any way, she never could be made nothin' of in a Christian way. She come

down to Parson Lothrop's study once or twice to be catechised; but he could n't get a word out o' her, and she kind o' seemed to sit scornful while he was a-talkin'. Folks said, if it was in old times, Ketury would n't have been allowed to go on so; but Parson Lothrop 's so sort o' mild, he let her take pretty much her own way. Everybody thought that Ketury was a witch; at least, she knew consid'able more 'n she ought to know, and so they was kind o' 'fraid on her. Cap'n Eb says he never see a fellow seem scareder than Cack did when he see Ketury a-standin' there.

"Why, ye see, boys, she was as withered and wrinkled and brown as an old frosted punkin-vine; and her little snaky eyes sparkled and snapped, and it made yer head kind o' dizzy to look at 'em; and folks used to say that anybody that Ketury got mad at was sure to get the worst of it fust or last. And so, no matter what day or hour Ketury had a mind to rap at anybody's door, folks gen'lly thought it was best to let her in; but then, they never thought her coming was for any good, for she was just like the wind, — she came when the fit was on her, she stayed jest so long as it pleased her, and went when she got ready, and not before. Ketury understood English, and could talk it well enough, but always seemed to scorn it, and was allers mowin' and mutterin' to herself in Indian, and winkin' and blinkin' as if she saw more folks round than you did, so that she wa'n't no way pleasant company; and yet everybody took good care to be polite to her.

"So old Cack asked her to come in, and did n't make no question where she come from, or what she come on; but he knew it was twelve good miles from where she lived to his hut, and the snow was drifted above her middle; and Cap'n Eb declared that there wa'n't no track, nor sign o' a track, of anybody's coming through that snow next morning."

"How did she get there, then?" said I.

"Did n't ye never see brown leaves a-ridin' on the wind? 'Well,' Cap'n Eb he says, 'she came on the wind,' and I 'm sure it was strong enough to fetch her. But Cack he got her down into the warm corner, and he poured her out a mug o' hot toddy, and give her: but ye see her bein' there sort o' stopped the conversation; for she sot there a-rockin' back'ards and for'ards, a-sippin' her toddy, and a-mutterin', and lookin' up chimbley.

"Cap'n Eb says in all his born days he never hearn such screeches and yells as the wind give over that chimbley; and old Cack got so frightened, you could fairly hear his teeth chatter.

"But Cap'n Eb he was a putty brave man, and he wa'n't goin' to have conversation stopped by no woman, witch or no witch; and so, when he see her mutterin', and lookin' up chimbley, he spoke up, and says he, 'Well, Ketury, what do you see?' says he. 'Come, out with it; don't keep it to yourself.' Ye see Cap'n Eb was a hearty fellow, and then he was a leetle warmed up with the toddy.

"Then he said he see an evil kind o' smile on Ketury's face, and she rattled her necklace o' bones and snakes' tails; and her eyes seemed to snap; and she looked up the chimbley, and called out, 'Come down, come down! let 's see who ye be.'

"Then there was a scratchin' and a rumblin' and a groan; and a pair of feet come down the chimbley, and stood right in the middle of the haarth, the toes p'intin' out'rds, with shoes and silver buckles a-shinin' in the fire-light. Cap'n Eb says he never come so near bein' scared in his life; and, as to old Cack, he jest wilted right down in his chair.

"Then old Ketury got up, and reached her stick up chimbley, and called out louder, 'Come down, come down! let 's see who ye be.' And, sure enough, down came a pair o' legs, and j'ined right on to the feet: good

fair legs they was, with ribbed stockings and leather breeches.

"'Wal, we 're in for it now,' says Cap'n Eb. 'Go it, Ketury, and let 's have the rest on him.'

"Ketury did n't seem to mind him: she stood there as stiff as a stake, and kep' callin' out, 'Come down, come down! let 's see who ye be.' And then come down the body of a man with a brown coat and yellow vest, and j'ined right on to the legs; but there wa'n't no arms to it. Then Ketury shook her stick up chimbley, and called, '*Come down, come down!*' And there came down a pair o' arms, and went on each side o' the body; and there stood a man all finished, only there wa'n't no head on him.

"'Wal, Ketury,' says Cap'n Eb, 'this 'ere 's getting serious. I 'spec' you must finish him up, and let 's see what he wants of us.'

"Then Ketury called out once more, louder 'n ever, 'Come down, come down! let 's see who ye be.' And, sure enough, down comes a man's head, and settled on the shoulders straight enough; and Cap'n Eb, the minit he sot eyes on him, knew he was Jehiel Lommedieu.

"Old Cack knew him too; and he fell flat on his face, and prayed the Lord to have mercy on his soul: but Cap'n Eb he was for gettin' to the bottom of matters, and not have his scare for nothin'; so he says to him, 'What do you want, now you hev come?'

"The man he did n't speak; he only sort o' moaned, and p'inted to the chimbley. He seemed to try to speak, but could n't; for ye see it is n't often that his sort o' folks is permitted to speak: but just then there came a screechin' blast o' wind, and blowed the door open, and blowed the smoke and fire all out into the room, and there seemed to be a whirlwind and darkness and moans and

screeches; and, when it all cleared up, Ketury and the man was both gone, and only old Cack lay on the ground, rolling and moaning as if he 'd die.

"Wal, Cap'n Eb he picked him up, and built up the fire, and sort o' comforted him up, 'cause the critter was in distress o' mind that was drefful. The awful Providence, ye see, had awakened him, and his sin had been set home to his soul; and he was under such conviction, that it all had to come out, — how old Cack's father had murdered poor Lommedieu for his money, and Cack had been privy to it, and helped his father build the body up in that very chimbley; and he said that he had n't had neither peace nor rest since then, and that was what had driv him away from ordinances; for ye know sinnin' will always make a man leave prayin'. Wal, Cack did n't live but a day or two. Cap'n Eb he got the minister o' Sherburne and one o' the selectmen down to see him; and they took his deposition. He seemed railly quite penitent; and Parson Carryl he prayed with him, and was faithful in settin' home the providence to his soul: and so, at the eleventh hour, poor old Cack might have got in; at least it looks a leetle like it. He was distressed to think he could n't live to be hung. He sort o' seemed to think, that if he was fairly tried, and hung, it would make it all square. He made Parson Carryl promise to have the old mill pulled down, and bury the body; and, after he was dead, they did it.

"Cap'n Eb he was one of a party o' eight that pulled down the chimbley; and there, sure enough, was the skeleton of poor Lommedieu.

"So there you see, boys, there can't be no iniquity so hid but what it 'll come out. The wild Indians of the forest, and the stormy winds and tempests, j'ined together to bring out this 'ere."

"For my part," said Aunt Lois sharply, "I never believed that story."

"Why, Lois," said my grandmother, "Cap'n Eb Sawin was a regular church member, and a most respectable man."

"Law, mother! I don't doubt he thought so. I suppose he and Cack got drinking toddy together, till he got asleep, and dreamed it. I would n't believe such a thing if it did happen right before my face and eyes. I should only think I was crazy, that 's all."

"Come, Lois, if I was you, I would n't talk so like a Sadducee," said my grandmother. "What would become of all the accounts in Dr. Cotton Mather's 'Magnilly' if folks were like you?"

"Wal," said Sam Lawson, drooping contemplatively over the coals, and gazing into the fire, "there 's a putty consid'able sight o' things in this world that 's true; and then ag'in there 's a sight o' things that ain't true. Now, my old gran'ther used to say, 'Boys,' says he, 'if ye want to lead a pleasant and prosperous life, ye must contrive allers to keep jest the *happy medium* between truth and falsehood.' Now, that 'ere 's my doctrine."

Aunt Lois knit severely.

"Boys," said Sam, "don't you want ter go down with me and get a mug o' cider?"

Of course we did, and took down a basket to bring up some apples to roast.

"Boys," says Sam mysteriously, while he was drawing the cider, "you jest ask your Aunt Lois to tell you what she knows 'bout Ruth Sullivan."

"Why, what is it?"

"Oh! you must ask *her*. These 'ere folks that 's so kind o' toppin' about sperits and sich, come sift 'em down, you gen'lly find they knows one story that kind o' puzzles 'em. Now you mind, and jist ask your Aunt Lois about Ruth Sullivan."

II

THE SULLIVAN LOOKING-GLASS

"Aunt Lois," said I, "what was that story about Ruth Sullivan?"

Aunt Lois's quick black eyes gave a surprised flash; and she and my grandmother looked at each other a minute significantly.

"Who told you anything about Ruth Sullivan?" she said sharply.

"Nobody. Somebody said you knew something about her," said I.

I was holding a skein of yarn for Aunt Lois; and she went on winding in silence, putting the ball through loops and tangled places.

"Little boys should n't ask questions," she concluded at last sententiously. "Little boys that ask too many questions get sent to bed."

I knew that of old, and rather wondered at my own hardihood.

Aunt Lois wound on in silence; but, looking in her face, I could see plainly that I had started an exciting topic.

"I should think," pursued my grandmother in her corner, "that Ruth's case might show you, Lois, that a good many things may happen, — more than you believe."

"Oh, well, mother! Ruth 's was a strange case; but I suppose there are ways of accounting for it."

"You believed Ruth, did n't you?"

"Oh, certainly, I believed Ruth! Why should n't I?

Ruth was one of my best friends, and as true a girl as lives: there was n't any nonsense about Ruth. She was one of the sort," said Aunt Lois reflectively, "that I 'd as soon trust as myself: when she said a thing was so and so, I knew it was so."

"Then, if you think Ruth's story was true," pursued my grandmother, "what 's the reason you are always cavilling at things just 'cause you can't understand how they came to be so ? "

Aunt Lois set her lips firmly, and wound with grim resolve. She was the very impersonation of that obstinate rationalism that grew up at the New England fireside, close alongside of the most undoubting faith in the supernatural.

"I don't believe such things," at last she snapped out, "and I don't disbelieve them. I just let 'em alone. What do I know about 'em ? Ruth tells me a story ; and I believe her. I know what she saw beforehand came true in a most remarkable way. Well, I 'm sure I 've no objection. One thing may be true, or another, for all me ; but, just because I believe Ruth Sullivan, I 'm not going to believe, right and left, all the stories in Cotton Mather, and all that anybody can hawk up to tell. Not I."

This whole conversation made me all the more curious to get at the story thus dimly indicated; and so we beset Sam for information.

"So your Aunt Lois would n't tell ye nothin'," said Sam. "Wanter know, neow ! sho ! "

"No: she said we must go to bed if we asked her."

"That 'ere 's a way folks has; but, ye see, boys," said Sam, while a droll confidential expression crossed the lacklustre dolefulness of his visage, "ye see, I put ye up to it, 'cause Miss Lois is so large and commandin' in her ways, and so kind o' up and down in all her doin's, that I like once and a while to sort o' gravel her; and I knowed

enough to know that that 'ere question would git her in a tight place.

"Ye see, yer Aunt Lois was knowin' to all this 'ere about Ruth, so there were n't no gettin' away from it; and it 's about as remarkable a providence as any o' them of Mister Cotton Marther's 'Magnilly.' So if you 'll come up in the barn chamber this arternoon, where I 've got a lot o' flax to hatchel out, I 'll tell ye all about it."

So that afternoon beheld Sam arranged at full length on a pile of top-tow in the barn chamber, hatcheling by proxy by putting Harry and myself to the service.

"Wal, now, boys, it 's kind o' refreshing to see how wal ye take hold," he observed. "Nothin' like bein' industrious while ye 're young: gret sight better now than loafin' off, down in them medders.

> "'In books and work and useful play
> Let my fust years be past:
> So shall I give for every day
> Some good account at last.'"

"But, Sam, if we work for you, you must tell us that story about Ruth Sullivan."

"Lordy massy! yis, — course I will. I 've had the best kind o' chances of knowin' all about that 'ere. Wal, you see there was old Gineral Sullivan, he lived in state and grande'r in the old Sullivan house out to Roxberry. I been to Roxberry, and seen that 'ere house o' Gineral Sullivan's. There was one time that I was a consid'able spell lookin' round in Roxberry, a kind o' seein' how things wuz there, and whether or no there might n't be some sort o' providential openin' or suthin'. I used to stay with Aunt Polly Ginger. She was sister to Mehitable Ginger, Gineral Sullivan's housekeeper, and hed the in and out o' the Sullivan house, and kind o' kept the run o' how things went and came in it. Polly she was a kind o' cousin o' my mother's, and allers glad to see me. Fact

was, I was putty handy round house; and she used to save up her broken things and sich till I come round in the fall; and then I 'd mend 'em up, and put the clock right, and split her up a lot o' kindlings, and board up the cellar windows, and kind o' make her sort o' comfortable, — she bein' a lone body, and no man round. As I said, it was sort o' convenient to hev me; and so I jest got the run o' things in the Sullivan house pretty much as ef I was one on 'em. Gineral Sullivan he kept a grand house, I tell you. You see, he cum from the old country, and felt sort o' lordly and grand; and they used to hev the gretest kind o' doin's there to the Sullivan house. Ye ought ter 'a' seen that 'ere house, — gret big front hall and gret wide stairs; none o' your steep kind that breaks a feller's neck to get up and down, but gret broad stairs with easy risers, so they used to say you could a cantered a pony up that 'ere stairway easy as not. Then there was gret wide rooms, and sofys, and curtains, and gret curtained bedsteads that looked sort o' like fortifications, and pictur's that was got in Italy and Rome and all them 'ere heathen places. Ye see, the Gineral was a dreffu1 worldly old critter, and was all for the pomps and the vanities. Lordy massy! I wonder what the poor old critter thinks about it all now, when his body 's all gone to dust and ashes in the grave-yard, and his soul 's gone to 'tarnity! Wal, that 'ere ain't none o' my business; only it shows the vanity o' riches in a kind o' strikin' light, and makes me content that I never had none."

"But, Sam, I hope General Sullivan was n't a wicked man, *was* he?"

"Wal, I would n't say he was railly wickeder than the run; but he was one o' these 'ere high-stepping, big-feeling fellers, that seem to be a-hevin' their portion in this life. Dreffu1 proud he was; and he was pretty much sot on this world, and kep' a sort o' court goin' on round him. Wal,

I don't jedge him nor nobody: folks that hes the world is apt to get sot on it. Don't none on us do more than middlin' well."

"But, Sam, what about Ruth Sullivan?"

"Ruth? Oh, yis! — Ruth —

"Wal, ye see, the only crook in the old Gineral's lot was he did n't hev no children. Mis' Sullivan, she was a beautiful woman, as handsome as a pictur'; but she never had but one child; and he was a son who died when he was a baby, and about broke her heart. And then this 'ere Ruth was her sister's child, that was born about the same time; and, when the boy died, they took Ruth home to sort o' fill his place, and kind o' comfort up Mis' Sullivan. And then Ruth's father and mother died; and they adopted her for their own, and brought her up.

"Wal, she grew up to be amazin' handsome. Why, everybody said that she was jest the light and glory of that 'ere old Sullivan place, and worth more 'n all the pictur's and the silver and the jewels, and all there was in the house; and she was jest so innercent and sweet, that you never see nothing to beat it. Wal, your Aunt Lois she got acquainted with Ruth one summer when she was up to Oldtown a-visitin' at Parson Lothrop's. Your Aunt Lois was a gal then, and a pretty good-lookin' one too; and, somehow or other, she took to Ruth, and Ruth took to her. And when Ruth went home, they used to be a-writin' backwards and for'ards; and I guess the fact was, Ruth thought about as much of your Aunt Lois as she did o' anybody. Ye see, your aunt was a kind o' strong up-and-down woman that always knew certain jest what she did know; and Ruth she was one o' them gals that seems sort o' like a stray lamb or a dove that 's sort o' lost their way in the world, and wants some one to show 'em where to go next. For, ye see the fact was, the old Gineral and Madam, they did n't agree very well. He wa'n't well pleased that she

did n't have no children; and she was sort o' jealous o' him 'cause she got hold o' some sort of story about how he was to 'a' married somebody else over there in England: so she got sort o' riled up, jest as wimmen will, the best on 'em; and they was pretty apt to have spats, and one could give t'other as good as they sent; and, by all accounts, they fit putty lively sometimes. And, between the two, Ruth she was sort o' scared, and fluttered like a dove that did n't know jest where to settle. Ye see, there she was in that 'ere great wide house, where they was a-feastin' and a-prancin' and a-dancin', and a-goin' on like Ahashuerus and Herodias and all them old Scriptur' days. There was a comin' and goin', and there was gret dinners and gret do-in's, but no love; and, you know, the Scriptur' says, 'Better is a dinner o' yarbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.'

"Wal, I don't orter say *hatred*, arter all. I kind o' reckon, the old Gineral did the best he could: the fact is, when a woman gits a kink in her head agin a man, the best on us don't allers do jest the right thing.

"Any way, Ruth she was sort o' forlorn, and did n't seem to take no comfort in the goin's on. The Gineral he was mighty fond on her, and proud on her; and there wa'n't nothin' too good for Ruth. He was free-handed, the Gineral wuz. He dressed her up in silks and satins, and she hed a maid to wait on her, and she hed sets o' pearl and di'mond; and Madam Sullivan she thought all the world on her, and kind o' worshiped the ground she trod on. And yet Ruth was sort o' lonesome.

"Ye see, Ruth wa'n't calculated for grande'r. Some folks ain't.

"Why, that 'ere summer she spent out to Oldtown she was jest as chirk and chipper as a wren, a-wearin' her little sunbunnet, and goin' a-huckleberryin' and a-blackberryin' and diggin' sweet-flag, and gettin' cowslops and

dandelions; and she hed a word for everybody. And everybody liked Ruth and wished her well. Wal, she was sent for her health; and she got that, and more too: she got a sweetheart.

"Ye see, there was a Cap'n Oliver a-visitin' at the minister's that summer, — a nice, handsome young man as ever was. He and Ruth and your Aunt Lois, they was together a good deal; and they was a-ramblin' and a-ridin' and a-sailin': and so Ruth and the Capting went the way o' all the airth, and fell dead in love with each other. Your Aunt Lois she was knowing to it and all about it, 'cause Ruth she was jest one of them that could n't take a step without somebody to talk to.

"Captain Oliver was of a good family in England; and so, when he made bold to ask the old Gineral for Ruth, he did n't say him nay: and it was agreed, as they was young, they should wait a year or two. If he and she was of the same mind, he should be free to marry her. Jest right on that, the Captain's regiment was ordered home, and he had to go; and, the next they heard, it was sent off to India. And poor little Ruth she kind o' drooped and pined; but she kept true, and would n't have nothin' to say to nobody that came arter her, for there was lots and cords o' fellows as did come arter her. Ye see, Ruth had a takin' way with her; and then she had the name of bein' a great heiress, and that allers draws fellers, as molasses does flies.

"Wal, then the news came, that Captain Oliver was comin' home to England, and the ship was took by the Algerines, and he was gone into slavery there among them heathen Mahomedans and what not.

"Folks seemed to think it was all over with him, and Ruth might jest as well give up fust as last. And the old Gineral he 'd come to think she might do better; and he kep' a-introducin' one and another, and tryin' to marry her off; but Ruth she would n't. She used to write sheets and

sheets to your Aunt Lois about it; and I think Aunt Lois she kep' her grit up. Your Aunt Lois she 'd a stuck by a man to the end o' time ef 't ben her case; and so she told Ruth.

"Wal, then there was young Jeff Sullivan, the Gineral's nephew, he turned up; and the Gineral he took a gret fancy to him. He was next heir to the Gineral; but he 'd ben a pretty rackety youngster in his young days, — off to sea, and what not, and sowed a consid'able crop o' wild oats. People said he 'd been a-pirating off there in South Ameriky. Lordy massy! nobody rightly knew where he hed ben or where he had n't: all was, he turned up at last all alive, and chipper as a skunk blackbird. Wal, of course he made his court to Ruth; and the Gineral, he rather backed him up in it; but Ruth she would n't have nothin' to say to him. Wal, he come and took up his lodgin' at the Gineral's; and he was jest as slippery as an eel, and sort o' slid into everything that was a-goin' on in house and about it. He was here, and he was there, and he was everywhere, and a-havin' his say about this and that; and he got everybody putty much under his thumb. And they used to say, he wound the Gineral round and round like a skein o' yarn; but he could n't come it round Ruth.

"Wal, the Gineral said she should n't be forced; and Jeff, he was smooth as satin, and said he 'd be willing to wait as long as Jacob did for Rachel. And so there he sot down, a-watchin' as patient as a cat at a mouse-hole; 'cause the Gineral he was thick-set and short-necked, and drank pretty free, and was one o' the sort that might pop off any time.

"Wal, Mis' Sullivan, she beset the Gineral to make a provision for Ruth; 'cause she told him very sensible, that he 'd brought her up in luxury, and that it wa'n't fair not to settle somethin' on her; and so the Gineral he said he 'd make a will, and part the property equally between them.

And he says to Jeff, that, if he played his part as a young fellow oughter know how, it would all come to him in the end; 'cause they had n't heard nothing from Captain Oliver for three or four years, and folks about settled it that he must be dead.

"Wal, the Gineral he got a letter about an estate that had come to him in England; and he had to go over. Wal, livin' on the next estate, was the very cousin of the Gineral's that he was to 'a' married when they was both young: the lands joined so that the grounds run together. What came between them two nobody knows; but she never married, and there she was. There was high words between the Gineral and Madam Sullivan about his goin' over. She said there wa'n't no sort o' need on 't, and he said there was; and she said she hoped *she* should be in her grave afore he come back; and he said she might suit herself about that for all him. That 'ere was the story that the housekeeper told to Aunt Polly; and Aunt Polly she told me. These 'ere squabbles somehow allers does kind o' leak out one way or t'other. Anyhow, it was a house divided agin itself at the Gineral's, when he was a-fixin' out for the voyage. There was Ruth a-goin' fust to one, and then to t'other, and tryin' all she could to keep peace between 'em; and there was this 'ere Master Slick Tongue talkin' this way to one side, and that way to t'other, and the old Gineral kind o' like a shuttlecock atween 'em.

"Wal, then, the night afore he sailed, the Gineral he hed his lawyer up in his library there, a-lookin' over all his papers and bonds and things, and a-witnessing his will; and Master Jeff was there, as lively as a cricket, a-goin' into all affairs, and offerin' to take precious good care while he was gone; and the Gineral he had his papers and letters out, a-sortin' on 'em over, which was to be took to the old country, and which was to be put in a trunk to go back to Lawyer Dean's office.

"Wal, Abner Ginger, Polly's boy, he that was footman and waiter then at the Gineral's he told me, that about eight o'clock that evening he went up with hot water and lemons and sperits and sich, and he see the gret green table in the library all strewed and covered with piles o' papers; and there was tin boxes a-standin' round; and the Gineral a-packin' a trunk, and young Master Jeff as lively and helpful as a rat that smells cheese. And then the Gineral he says, 'Abner,' says he, 'can you write your name?' 'I should hope so, Gineral,' says Abner. 'Wal, then, Abner,' says he, 'this is my last will; and I want you to witness it,' and so Abner he put down his name opposite to a place with a wafer and a seal; and then the Gineral he says, 'Abner, you tell Ginger to come here.' That, you see, was his housekeeper, my Aunt Polly's sister, and a likely woman as ever was. And so they had her up, and she put down her name to the will; and then Aunt Polly she was had up (she was drinking tea there that night), and she put down her name. And all of 'em did it with good heart, 'cause it had got about among 'em that the will was to provide for Miss Ruth; for everybody loved Ruth, ye see, and there was consid'ble many stories kind o' goin' the rounds about Master Jeff and his doin's. And they did say he sort o' kep' up the strife atween the Gineral and my lady, and so they did n't think none too well o' him; and as he was next o' kin, and Miss Ruth wa'n't none o' the Gineral's blood (ye see, she was Mis' Sullivan's sister's child), of course there would n't nothin' go to Miss Ruth in way o' law, and so that was why the signin' o' that 'ere will was so much talked about among 'em.

"Wal, you see, the Gineral he sailed the next day; and Jeff he stayed by to keep watch o' things.

"Wal, the old Gineral he got over safe; for Mis' Sullivan she had a letter from him all right. When he got away, his conscience sort o' nagged him, and he was minded

to be a good husband. At any rate, he wrote a good loving letter to her, and sent his love to Ruth, and sent over lots o' little keepsakes and things for her, and told her that he left her under good protection, and wanted her to try and make up her mind to marry Jeff, as that would keep the property together.

"Wal, now there could n't be no sort o' sugar sweeter than Jeff was to them lone wimmen. Jeff was one o' the sort that could be all things to all wimmen. He waited and he tended, and he was as humble as any snake in the grass that ever ye see; and the old lady she clean fell in with him, but Ruth she seemed to have a regular spite agin him. And she that war as gentle as a lamb, that never had so much as a hard thought of a mortal critter, and would n't tread on a worm, she was so set agin Jeff, that she would n't so much as touch his hand when she got out o' her kerridge.

"Wal, now comes the strange part o' my story. Ruth was one o' the kind that *hes the gift o' seein'. She was born with a veil over her face!*"

This mysterious piece of physiological information about Ruth was given with a look and air that announced something very profound and awful; and we both took up the inquiry, "Born with a veil over her face? How should that make her see?"

"Wal, boys, how should I know? But the fact *is so.* There 's those as is wal known as hes the gift o' seein' what others can't see: they can see through walls and houses; they can see people's hearts; they can see what 's to come. They don't know nothin' how 't is, but this 'ere knowledge comes to 'em: it 's a gret gift; and that sort 's born with the veil over their faces. Ruth was o' these 'ere. Old Granny Badger she was the knowingest old nuss in all these parts; and she was with Ruth's mother when she was born, and she told Lady Lothrop all about it. Says she, 'You may depend upon it that child 'll have the "*second-sight,*" ' says

she. Oh, that 'ere fact was wal known! Wal, that was the reason why Jeff Sullivan could n't come it round Ruth though he was silkier than a milkweed-pod, and jest about as patient as a spider in his hole a-watchin' to get his grip on a fly. Ruth would n't argue with him, and she would n't flout him; but she jest shut herself up in herself, and kept a lookout on him; but she told your Aunt Lois jest what she thought about him.

"Wal, in about six months, come the news that the Gineral was dead. He dropped right down in his tracks, dead with apoplexy, as if he had been shot; and Lady Maxwell she writ a long letter to my lady and Ruth. Ye see, he 'd got to be Sir Thomas Sullivan over there; and he was a-comin' home to take 'em all over to England to live in grande'r. Wal, my Lady Sullivan (she was then, ye see) she took it dreffful hard. Ef they 'd 'a' been the lovingest couple in the world, she could n't 'a' took it harder. Aunt Polly she said it was all 'cause she thought so much of him, that she fit him so. There 's women that thinks so much o' their husbands that they won't let 'em hev no peace o' their life; and I expect it war so with her poor soul! Any way, she went right down smack when she heard he was dead. She was abed, sick, when the news come; and she never spoke nor smiled, jest turned her back to everybody, and kinder wilted and wilted, and was dead in a week. And there was poor little Ruth left all alone in the world, with neither kith nor kin but Jeff.

"Wal, when the funeral was over, and the time ap-p'inted to read the will and settle up matters, there wa'n't no will to be found nowhere, high nor low.

"Lawyer Dean he flew round like a parched pea on a shovel. He said he thought he could 'a' gone in the darkest night, and put his hand on that 'ere will; but when he went where he thought it was, he found it wa'n't there, and he knowed he 'd kep' it under lock and key. What he

thought was the will turned out to be an old mortgage. Wal, there was an awful row and a to-do about it, you may be sure. Ruth she jist said nothin' good or bad. And her not speakin' made Jeff a sight more uncomfortable than ef she 'd a hed it out with him. He told her it should n't make no sort o' difference ; that he should allers stand ready to give her all he hed, if she 'd only take him with it. And when it came to that she only gin him a look, and went out o' the room.

" Jeff he flared and flounced and talked, and went round and round a-rumpussin' among the papers, but no will was forthcomin', high or low. Wal, now, here comes what 's remarkable. Ruth she told this 'ere, all the particulars, to yer Aunt Lois and Lady Lothrop. She said that the night after the funeral she went up to her chamber. Ruth had the gret front chamber, opposite to Mis' Sullivan's. I 've been in it ; it was a monstrous big room, with outlandish furniture in it, that the Gineral brought over from an old palace out to Italy. And there was a great big lookin'-glass over the dressin'-table, that they said come from Venice, that swung so that you could see the whole room in it. Wal, she was a-standin' front o' this, jist goin' to undress herself, a-hearin' the rain drip on the leaves and the wind a-whishin' and whisperin' in the old elm-trees, and jist a-thinkin' over her lot, and what should she do now, all alone in the world, when of a sudden she felt a kind o' lightness in her head, and she thought she seemed to see somebody in the glass a-movin'. And she looked behind, and there wa'n't nobody there. Then she looked forward in the glass, and saw a strange big room, that she 'd never seen before, with a long painted winder in it ; and alongside o' this stood a tall cabinet with a good many drawers in it. And she saw herself, and knew that it was herself, in this room, along with another woman whose back was turned towards her. She saw herself speak to this woman,

and p'int to the cabinet. She saw the woman nod her head. She saw herself go to the cabinet, and open the middle drawer, and take out a bundle o' papers from the very back end on 't. She saw her take out a paper from the middle, and open it, and hold it up; and she knew that there was the missin' will. Wal, it all overcome her so that she fainted clean away. And her maid found her a-lyin' front o' the dressin'-table on the floor.

"She was sick of a fever for a week or fortnight a'ter; and your Aunt Lois she was down takin' care of her; and, as soon as she got able to be moved, she was took out to Lady Lothrop's. Jeff he was jist as attentive and good as he could be; but she would n't bear him near her room. If he so much as set a foot on the stairs that led to it she 'd know it, and got so wild that he hed to be kept from comin' into the front o' the house. But he was doin' his best to buy up good words from everybody. He paid all the servants double; he kept every one in their places, and did so well by 'em all that the gen'l word among 'em was that Miss Ruth could n't do better than to marry such a nice, open-handed gentleman.

"Wal, Lady Lothrop she wrote to Lady Maxwell all that hed happened; and Lady Maxwell she sent over for Ruth to come over and be a companion for her, and said she 'd adopt her, and be as a mother to her.

"Wal, then Ruth she went over with some gentlefolks that was goin' back to England, and offered to see her safe and sound; and so she was set down at Lady Maxwell's manor. It was a grand place, she said, and such as she never see before, — like them old gentry places in England. And Lady Maxwell she made much of her, and cosseted her up for the sake of what the old Gineral had said about her. And Ruth she told her all her story, and how she believed that the will was to be found somewhere, and that she should be led to see it yet.

"She told her, too, that she felt it in her that Cap'n Oliver was n't dead, and that he 'd come back yet. And Lady Maxwell she took up for her with might and main, and said she 'd stand by her. But then, ye see, so long as there wa'n't no will to be found, there wa'n't nothin' to be done. Jeff was the next heir; and he 'd got everything, stock, and lot, and the estate in England into the bargain. And folks was beginnin' to think putty well of him, as folks allers does when a body is up in the world, and hes houses and lands. Lordy massy! riches allers covers a multitude o' sins.

"Finally, when Ruth hed ben six months with her, one day Lady Maxwell got to tellin' her all about her history, and what hed ben atween her and her cousin, when they was young, and how they hed a quarrel and he flung off to Ameriky, and all them things that it don't do folks no good to remember when it 's all over and can't be helped. But she was a lone body, and it seemed to do her good to talk about it.

"Finally, she says to Ruth, says she, 'I 'll show you a room in this house you hain't seen before. It was the room where we hed that quarrel,' says she; 'and the last I saw of him was there, till he come back to die,' says she.

"So she took a gret key out of her bunch; and she led Ruth along a long passageway to the other end of the house, and opened on a great library. And the minute Ruth came in, she threw up her hands and gin a great cry. 'Oh!' says she, 'this is the room! and there is the window! and there is the cabinet! and *there in that middle drawer at the back end in a bundle of papers* IS THE WILL!'

"And Lady Maxwell she said, quite dazed, 'Go look,' says she. And Ruth went, jest as she seed herself do, and opened the drawer, and drew forth from the back part a yellow pile of old letters. And in the middle of those

was the will, sure enough. Ruth drew it out, and opened it, and showed it to her.

"Wal, you see that will give Ruth the whole of the Gineral's property in America, though it did leave the English estate to Jeff.

"Wal, the end on 't was like a story-book.

"Jeff he made believe be mighty glad. And he said it must 'a' ben that the Gineral hed got flustered with the sperit and water, and put that 'ere will in among his letters that he was a-doin' up to take back to England. For it was in among Lady Maxwell's letters that she writ him when they was young, and that he 'd a-kep' all these years and was a-takin' back to her.

"Wal, Lawyer Dean said he was sure that Jeff made himself quite busy and useful that night, a-tyin' up the papers with red tape, and a-packin' the Gineral's trunk; and that, when Jeff gin him his bundle to lock up in his box, he never mistrusted but what he 'd got it all right.

"Wal, you see it was jest one of them things that can't be known to the jedgment day. It might 'a' ben an accident, and then ag'in it might not; and folks settled it one way or t'other, 'cordin' to their 'pinion o' Jeff; but ye see how 'mazin' handy for him it happened! Why, ef it had n't ben for the providence I 've ben a-tellin' about, there it might 'a' lain in them old letters, that Lady Maxwell said she never hed the heart to look over! it never would 'a' turned up in the world."

"Well," said I, "what became of Ruth?"

"Oh! Cap'n Oliver he came back all alive, and escaped from the Algerines; and they was married in King's Chapel, and lived in the old Sullivan House, in peace and prosperity. That 's jest how the story was; and now Aunt Lois can make what she 's a mind ter out on 't."

"And what became of Jeff?"

"Oh! he started to go over to England, and the ship

was wrecked off the Irish coast, and that was the last of him. He never got to his property."

"Good enough for him," said both of us.

"Wal, I don't know: 't was pretty hard on Jeff. Mebbe he did, and mebbe he did n't. I 'm glad I wa'n't in his shoes, though. I 'd rather never hed nothin'. This 'ere hastin' to be rich is sich a dreffal temptation.

"Wal, now, boys, ye 've done a nice lot o' flax, and I guess we 'll go up to yer grand'ther's cellar and git a mug o' cider. Talkin' always gits me dry.'

III

THE MINISTER'S HOUSEKEEPER

SCENE. — The shady side of a blueberry-pasture. — Sam Lawson with the boys, picking blueberries. — Sam, *loq.*

"WAL, you see, boys, 't was just here, — Parson Carryl's wife she died along in the forepart o' March: my cousin Huldy she undertook to keep house for him. The way on 't was, that Huldy she went to take care o' Mis' Carryl in the fust on 't, when she fust took sick. Huldy was a tailoress by trade; but then she was one o' these 'ere facultized persons that has a gift for most anything, and that was how Mis' Carryl come to set sech store by her, that, when she was sick, nothin' would do for her but she must have Huldy round all the time: and the minister he said he 'd make it good to her all the same, and she should n't lose nothin' by it. And so Huldy she stayed with Mis' Carryl full three months afore she died, and got to seein' to everything pretty much round the place.

"Wal, arter Mis' Carryl died, Parson Carryl he 'd got so kind o' used to hevin' on her round, takin' care o' things, that he wanted her to stay along a spell; and so Huldy she stayed along a spell, and poured out his tea, and mended his close, and made pies and cakes, and cooked and washed and ironed, and kep' everything as neat as a pin. Huldy was a dreffful chipper sort o' gal; and work sort o' rolled off from her like water off a duck's back. There wa'n't no gal in Sherburne that could put sich a sight o' work through as Huldy; and yet, Sunday mornin', she

always come out in the singers' seat like one o' these 'ere June roses, lookin' so fresh and smilin', and her voice was jest as clear and sweet as a meadow lark's — Lordy massy! I 'member how she used to sing some o' them 'ere places where the treble and counter used to go together: her voice kind o' trembled a little, and it sort o' went through and through a feller! tuck him right where he lived!"

Here Sam leaned contemplatively back with his head in a clump of sweet-fern, and refreshed himself with a chew of young wintergreen. "This 'ere young wintergreen, boys, is jest like a feller's thoughts o' things that happened when he was young: it comes up jest so fresh and tender every year, the longest time you hev to live; and you can't help chawin' on 't though 't is sort o' stingin'. I don't never get over likin' young wintergreen."

"But about Huldah, Sam?"

"Oh yes! about Huldy. Lordy massy! when a feller is Indianin' round, these 'ere pleasant summer days, a feller's thoughts gits like a flock o' young partridges: they 's up and down and everywhere; 'cause one place is jest about as good as another, when they 's all so kind o' comfortable and nice. Wal, about Huldy, — as I was a-sayin'. She was jest as handsome a gal to look at as a feller could have; and I think a nice, well-behaved young gal in the singers' seat of a Sunday is a means o' grace: it 's sort o' drawin' to the unregenerate, you know. Why, boys, in them days, I 've walked ten miles over to Sherburne of a Sunday mornin', jest to play the bass-viol in the same singers' seat with Huldy. She was very much respected, Huldy was; and, when she went out to tailorin', she was allers bespoke six months ahead, and sent for in waggins up and down for ten miles round; for the young fellers was allers 'mazin' anxious to be sent after Huldy, and was quite free to offer to go for her. Wal, after Mis' Carryl died, Huldy got to be sort o' housekeeper at the minister's, and

saw to everything, and did everything: so that there wa'n't a pin out o' the way.

"But you know how 't is in parishes: there allers is women that thinks the minister's affairs belongs to them, and they ought to have the rulin' and guidin' of 'em; and, if a minister's wife dies, there 's folks that allers has their eyes open on providences, — lookin' out who 's to be the next one.

"Now, there was Mis' Amaziah Pipperidge, a widder with snappin' black eyes, and a hook nose, — kind o' like a hawk; and she was one o' them up-and-down commandin' sort o' women, that feel that they have a call to be seein' to everything that goes on in the parish, and 'specially to the minister.

"Folks did say that Mis' Pipperidge sort o' sot her eye on the Parson for herself: wal, now that 'ere might 'a' been, or it might not. Some folks thought it was a very suitable connection. You see, she hed a good property of her own, right nigh to the minister's lot, and was allers kind o' active and busy; so, takin' one thing with another, I should n't wonder if Mis' Pipperidge should a thought that Providence p'inted that way. At any rate, she went up to Deakin Blodgett's wife, and they two sort o' put their heads together a-mournin' and condolin' about the way things was likely to go on at the minister's now Mis' Carryl was dead. Ye see, the Parson's wife, she was one of them women who hed their eyes everywhere and on everything. She was a little thin woman, but tough as Inger rubber, and smart as a steel trap; and there wa'n't a hen laid an egg, or cackled, but Mis' Carryl was right there to see about it; and she hed the garden made in the spring, and the medders mowed in summer, and the cider made, and the corn husked, and the apples got in the fall; and the doctor, he hed n't nothin' to do but jest sit stock-still a-meditatin' on Jerusalem and Jericho and them

things that ministers think about. But Lordy massy! he did n't know nothin' about where anything he eat or drunk or wore come from or went to: his wife jest led him round in temporal things and took care on him like a baby.

"Wal, to be sure, Mis' Carryl looked up to him in spirituals, and thought all the world on him; for there wa'n't a smarter minister nowhere round. Why, when he preached on decrees and election, they used to come clear over from South Parish, and West Sherburne, and Oldtown to hear him; and there was sich a row o' waggins tied along by the meetin'-house that the stables was all full, and all the hitchin'-posts was full clean up to the tavern, so that folks said the doctor made the town look like a gineral trainin'-day a Sunday.

"He was gret on texts, the doctor was. When he hed a p'int to prove, he 'd jest go through the Bible, and drive all the texts ahead o' him like a flock o' sheep; and then, if there was a text that seemed agin him, why, he 'd come out with his Greek and Hebrew, and kind o' chase it round a spell, jest as ye see a feller chase a contrary bell-wether, and make him jump the fence arter the rest. I tell you, there wa'n't no text in the Bible that could stand agin the doctor when his blood was up. The year arter the doctor was app'inted to preach the 'lection sermon in Boston, he made such a figger that the Brattle Street Church sent a committee right down to see if they could n't get him to Boston; and then the Sherburne folks, they up and raised his salary; ye see, there ain't nothin' wakes folks up like somebody else's wantin' what you 've got. Wal, that fall they made him a Doctor o' Divinity at Cambridge College, and so they sot more by him than ever. Wal, you see, the doctor, of course he felt kind o' lonesome and afflicted when Mis' Carryl was gone; but railly and truly, Huldy was so up to everything about house, that the doctor

did n't miss nothin' in a temporal way. His shirt-bosoms was pleated finer than they ever was, and them ruffles round his wrists was kep' like the driven snow; and there wa'n't a brack in his silk stockin's, and his shoe-buckles was kep' polished up, and his coats brushed, and then there wa'n't no bread and biscuit like Huldy's; and her butter was like solid lumps o' gold; and there were n't no pies to equal hers; and so the doctor never felt the loss o' Mis' Carryl at table. Then there was Huldy allers oppisite to him, with her blue eyes and her cheeks like two fresh peaches. She was kind o' pleasant to look at; and the more the doctor looked at her the better he liked her; and so things seemed to be goin' on quite quiet and comfortable ef it had n't been that Mis' Pipperidge and Mis' Deakin Blodgett and Mis' Sawin got their heads together a-talkin' about things.

"'Poor man,' says Mis' Pipperidge, 'what can that child that he 's got there do towards takin' the care of all that place? It takes a mature woman,' she says, 'to tread in Mis' Carryl's shoes.'

"'That it does,' said Mis' Blodgett; 'and, when things once get to runnin' downhill, there ain't no stoppin' on 'em,' says she.

"Then Mis' Sawin she took it up. (Ye see, Mis' Sawin used to go out to dressmakin', and was sort o' jealous, 'cause folks sot more by Huldy than they did by her.) 'Well,' says she, 'Huldy Peters is well enough at her trade. I never denied that, though I do say I never did believe in her way o' makin' buttonholes; and I must say, if 't was the dearest friend I hed, that I thought Huldy tryin' to fit Mis' Kittridge's plum-colored silk was a clear piece o' presumption; the silk was jist sp'iled, so 't wa'n't fit to come into the meetin'-house. I must say, Huldy 's a gal that 's always too ventersome about takin' 'sponsibilities she don't know nothin' about.'

"'Of course she don't,' said Mis' Deakin Blodgett. 'What does she know about all the lookin' and seein' to that there ought to be in guidin' the minister's house. Huldy 's well meanin', and she 's good at her work, and good in the singers' seat; but Lordy massy! she hain't got no experience. Parson Carryl ought to have an experienced woman to keep house for him. There 's the spring house-cleanin' and the fall house-cleanin' to be seen to, and the things to be put away from the moths; and then the gettin' ready for the Association and all the ministers' meetin's; and the makin' the soap and the candles, and settin' the hens and turkeys, watchin' the calves, and seein' after the hired men and the garden; and there that 'ere blessed man jist sets there at home as serene, and has nobody round but that 'ere gal, and don't even know how things must be a-runnin' to waste!'

"Wal, the upshot on 't was, they fussed and fuzzled and wuzzled till they 'd drinked up all the tea in the teapot; and then they went down and called on the Parson, and wuzzled him all up talkin' about this, that, and t'other that wanted lookin' to, and that it was no way to leave everything to a young chit like Huldy, and that he ought to be lookin' about for an experienced woman. The Parson he thanked 'em kindly, and said he believed their motives was good, but he did n't go no further. He did n't ask Mis' Pipperidge to come and stay there and help him, nor nothin' o' that kind; but he said he 'd attend to matters himself. The fact was, the Parson had got such a likin' for havin' Huldy round, that he could n't think o' such a thing as swappin' her off for the Widder Pipperidge.

"But he thought to himself, 'Huldy is a good girl; but I ought n't to be a-leavin' everything to her, — it 's too hard on her. I ought to be instructin' and guidin' and helpin' of her; 'cause 't ain't everybody could be expected to know and do what Mis' Carryl did;' and so at it he went;

and Lordy massy! did n't Huldy hev a time on 't when the minister began to come out of his study, and want to tew round and see to things? Huldy, you see, thought all the world of the minister, and she was 'most afraid to laugh; but she told me she could n't, for the life of her, help it when his back was turned, for he wuzzled things up in the most singular way. But Huldy she 'd jest say, 'Yes, sir,' and get him off into his study, and go on her own way.

"'Huldy,' says the minister one day, 'you ain't experienced outdoors; and, when you want to know anything, you must come to me.'

"'Yes, sir,' says Huldy.

"'Now, Huldy,' says the Parson, 'you must be sure to save the turkey-eggs, so that we can have a lot of turkeys for Thanksgiving.'

"'Yes, sir,' says Huldy; and she opened the pantry-door, and showed him a nice dishful she 'd been a-savin' up. Wal, the very next day the Parson's hen-turkey was found killed up to old Jim Scroggs's barn. Folks said Scroggs killed it; though Scroggs he stood to it he did n't: at any rate, the Scroggses they made a meal on 't; and Huldy she felt bad about it, 'cause she 'd set her heart on raisin' the turkeys; and says she, 'Oh, dear! I don't know what I shall do. I was just ready to set her.'

"'Do, Huldy?' says the Parson. 'Why, there 's the other turkey, out there by the door; and a fine bird, too, he is.'

"Sure enough, there was the old tom-turkey a-struttin' and a-sidlin' and a-quitterin', and a-floutin' his tail-feathers in the sun, like a lively young widower, all ready to begin life over ag'in.

"'But,' says Huldy, 'you know *he* can't set on eggs.'

"'He can't? I 'd like to know why,' says the Parson. 'He shall set on eggs, and hatch 'em too.'

"'O doctor!' says Huldy, all in a tremble; 'cause,

you know, she did n't want to contradict the minister, and she was afraid she should laugh, — 'I never heard that a tom-turkey would set on eggs.'

"'Why, they ought to,' said the Parson, getting quite 'arnest; 'what else be they good for? you just bring out the eggs, now, and put 'em in the nest, and I 'll make him set on 'em.'

"So Huldy she thought there were n't no way to convince him but to let him try: so she took the eggs out, and fixed 'em all nice in the nest; and then she come back and found old Tom a-skirmishin' with the Parson pretty lively, I tell ye. Ye see, old Tom he did n't take the idee at all; and he flopped and gobbled, and fit the Parson; and the Parson's wig got round so that his cue stuck straight out over his ear, but he 'd got his blood up. Ye see, the old doctor was used to carryin' his p'ints o' doctrine; and he had n't fit the Arminians and Socinians to be beat by a tom-turkey; so finally he made a dive, and ketched him by the neck in spite o' his floppin', and stroked him down, and put Huldy's apron round him.

"'There, Huldy,' he says, quite red in the face, 'we 've got him now;' and he traveled off to the barn with him as lively as a cricket.

"Huldy came behind jist chokin' with laugh, and afraid the minister would look round and see her.

"'Now, Huldy, we 'll crook his legs, and set him down,' says the Parson, when they got him to the nest; 'you see he is getting quiet, and he 'll set there all right.'

"And the Parson he sot him down; and old Tom he sot there solemn enough, and held his head down all droopin', lookin' like a rail pious old cock, as long as the Parson sot by him.

"'There! you see how still he sets,' says the Parson to Huldy.

"Huldy was 'most dyin' for fear she should laugh. 'I 'm afraid he 'll get up,' says she, 'when you do.'

"'Oh no, he won't!' says the Parson, quite confident. 'There, there,' says he, layin' his hands on him, as if pronouncin' a blessin'. But when the Parson riz up, old Tom he riz up too, and began to march over the eggs.

"'Stop, now!' says the Parson. 'I'll make him get down ag'in: hand me that corn-basket; we'll put that over him.'

"So he crooked old Tom's legs, and got him down ag'in; and they put the corn-basket over him, and then they both stood and waited.

"'That'll do the thing, Huldy,' said the Parson.

"'I don't know about it,' says Huldy.

"'Oh yes, it will, child! I understand,' says he.

"Just as he spoke, the basket riz right up and stood, and they could see old Tom's long legs.

"'I'll make him stay down, confound him,' says the Parson; for, ye see, parsons is men, like the rest on us, and the doctor had got his spunk up.

"'You jist hold him a minute, and I'll get something that'll make him stay, I guess;' and out he went to the fence, and brought in a long, thin, flat stone, and laid it on old Tom's back.

"Old Tom he wilted down considerable under this, and looked railly as if he was goin' to give in. He stayed still there a good long spell, and the minister and Huldy left him there and come up to the house; but they had n't more than got in the door before they see old Tom a-hippin' along, as high-steppin' as ever, sayin', 'Talk! talk! and quitter! quitter!' and struttin' and gobblin' as if he'd come through the Red Sea, and got the victory.

"'Oh, my eggs!' says Huldy. 'I'm afraid he's smashed 'em!'

"And sure enough, there they was, smashed flat enough under the stone.

"'I'll have him killed,' said the Parson: 'we won't have such a critter round.'

"But the Parson he slep' on 't, and then did n't do it; he only come out next Sunday with a tiptop sermon on the ''Riginal Cuss' that was pronounced on things in gineral, when Adam fell, and showed how everything was allowed to go contrary ever since. There was pigweed, and pusley, and Canady thistles, cut-worms, and bag-worms, and canker-worms, to say nothin' of rattlesnakes. The doctor made it very impressive and sort o' improvin'; but Huldy she told me, goin' home, that she hardly could keep from laughin' two or three times in the sermon when she thought of old Tom a-standin' up with the corn-basket on his back.

"Wal, next week Huldy she jist borrowed the minister's horse and side-saddle, and rode over to South Parish to her Aunt Bascome's, — Widder Bascome's, you know, that lives there by the trout-brook, — and got a lot o' turkey-eggs o' her, and come back and set a hen on 'em, and said nothin'; and in good time there was as nice a lot o' turkey-chicks as ever ye see.

"Huldy never said a word to the minister about his experiment, and he never said a word to her; but he sort o' kep' more to his books, and did n't take it on him to advise so much.

"But not long arter he took it into his head that Huldy ought to have a pig to be a-fattin' with the buttermilk. Mis' Pipperidge set him up to it; and jist then old Tim Bigelow, out to Juniper Hill, told him if he 'd call over he 'd give him a little pig.

"So he sent for a man, and told him to build a pig-pen right out by the well, and have it all ready when he came home with his pig.

"Huldy she said she wished he might put a curb round the well out there, because in the dark, sometimes, a body might stumble into it; and the Parson he told him he might do that.

"Wal, old Aikin, the carpenter, he did n't come till most the middle of the arternoon; and then he sort o' idled, so that he did n't get up the well-curb till sundown; and then he went off and said he 'd come and do the pig-pen next day.

"Wal, arter dark, Parson Carryl he driv into the yard, full chizel, with his pig. He 'd tied up his mouth to keep him from squealin'; and he see what he thought was the pig-pen, — he was rather near-sighted, — and so he ran and threw piggy over; and down he dropped into the water, and the minister put out his horse and pranced off into the house quite delighted.

"'There, Huldy, I 've got you a nice little pig.'

"'Dear me!' says Huldy: 'where have you put him?'

"'Why, out there in the pig-pen, to be sure.'

"'Oh dear me!' says Huldy: 'that 's the well-curb. There ain't no pig-pen built,' says she.

"'Lordy massy!' says the Parson: 'then I 've thrown the pig in the well!'

"Wal, Huldy she worked and worked, and finally she fished piggy out in the bucket, but he was dead as a door-nail; and she got him out o' the way quietly, and did n't say much; and the Parson he took to a great Hebrew book in his study; and says he, 'Huldy, I ain't much in temporals,' says he. Huldy says she kind o' felt her heart go out to him, he was so sort o' meek and helpless and larned; and says she, 'Wal, Parson Carryl, don't trouble your head no more about it; I 'll see to things;' and sure enough, a week arter there was a nice pen, all ship-shape, and two little white pigs that Huldy bought with the money for the butter she sold at the store.

"'Wal, Huldy,' said the Parson, 'you are a most amazin' child: you don't say nothin,' but you do more than most folks.'

"Arter that the Parson set sich store by Huldy that he come to her and asked her about everything, and it was amazin' how everything she put her hand to prospered. Huldy planted marigolds and larkspurs, pinks and carnations, all up and down the path to the front door, and trained up mornin'-glories and scarlet-runners round the windows. And she was always a-gettin' a root here, and a sprig there, and a seed from somebody else, — for Huldy was one o' them that has the gift, so that ef you jist give 'em the leastest sprig of anything they make a great bush out of it right away; so that in six months Huldy had roses and geraniums and lilies, sich as it would a took a gardener to raise. The Parson he took no notice at fust; but when the yard was all ablaze with flowers he used to come and stand in a kind o' maze at the front door, and say, 'Beautiful, beautiful! Why, Huldy, I never see anything like it.' And then when her work was done arternoons, Huldy would sit with her sewin' in the porch, and sing and trill away till she 'd draw the meadow larks and the bobolinks and the orioles to answer her, and the great big elm-tree overhead would get perfectly rackety with the birds; and the Parson, settin' there in his study, would git to kind o' dreamin' about the angels, and golden harps, and the New Jerusalem; but he would n't speak a word, 'cause Huldy she was jist like them wood-thrushes, she never could sing so well when she thought folks was hearin'. Folks noticed, about this time, that the Parson's sermons got to be like Aaron's rod, that budded and blossomed; there was things in 'em about flowers and birds, and more 'special about the music o' heaven. And Huldy she noticed, that ef there was a hymn run in her head while she was round a-workin' the minister was sure to give it out next Sunday. You see, Huldy was jist like a bee: she always sung when she was workin', and you could hear her trillin', now down in the corn-patch, while she was

pickin' the corn; and now in the buttery, while she was workin' the butter; and now she 'd go singin' down cellar, and then she 'd be singin' up overhead, so that she seemed to fill a house chock full o' music.

"Huldy was so sort o' chipper and fair-spoken that she got the hired men all under her thumb: they come to her and took her orders jist as meek as so many calves; and she traded at the store, and kep' the accounts, and she hed her eyes everywhere, and tied up all the ends so tight that there wa'n't no gettin' round her. She would n't let nobody put nothin' off on Parson Carryl, 'cause he was a minister. Huldy was allers up to anybody that wanted to make a hard bargain; and, afore he knew jist what he was about, she 'd got the best end of it, and everybody said that Huldy was the most capable gal that they 'd ever traded with.

"Wal, come to the meetin' of the Association, Mis' Deakin Blodgett and Mis' Pipperidge come callin' up to the Parson's, all in a stew, and offerin' their services to get the house ready; but the doctor he jist thanked 'em quite quiet, and turned 'em over to Huldy; and Huldy she told 'em that she 'd got everything ready, and showed 'em her pantries, and her cakes and her pies and her puddin's, and took 'em all over the house; and they went peekin' and pokin', openin' cupboard doors, and lookin' into drawers; and they could n't find so much as a thread out o' the way, from garret to cellar, and so they went off quite discontented. Arter that the women set a new trouble a-brewin'. Then they begun to talk that it was a year now since Mis' Carryl died; and it railly was n't proper such a young gal to be stayin' there, who everybody could see was a-settin' her cap for the minister.

"Mis' Pipperidge said that, so long as she looked on Huldy as the hired gal, she had n't thought much about it; but Huldy was railly takin' on airs as an equal, and ap-

pearin' as mistress o' the house in a way that would make talk if it went on. And Mis' Pipperidge she driv round up to Deakin Abner Snow's, and down to Mis' 'Lijah Perry's, and asked them if they was n't afraid that the way the Parson and Huldy was a-goin' on might make talk. And they said they had n't thought on 't before, but now, come to think on 't, they was sure it would; and they all went and talked with somebody else, and asked them if they did n't think it would make talk. So come Sunday, between meetin's there wa'n't nothin' else talked about; and Huldy saw folks a-noddin' and a-winkin', and a-lookin' arter her, and she begun to feel drefful sort o' disagreeable. Finally Mis' Sawin she says to her, 'My dear, did n't you never think folks would talk about you and the minister?'

"'No: why should they?' says Huldy, quite innocent.

"'Wal, dear,' says she, 'I think it 's a shame; but they say you 're tryin' to catch him, and that it 's so bold and improper for you to be courtin' of him right in his own house, — you know folks will talk, — I thought I 'd tell you 'cause I think so much of you,' says she.

"Huldy was a gal of spirit, and she despised the talk, but it made her drefful uncomfortable; and when she got home at night she sat down in the mornin'-glory porch, quite quiet, and did n't sing a word.

"The minister he had heard the same thing from one of his deakins that day; and when he saw Huldy so kind o' silent, he says to her, 'Why don't you sing, my child?'

"He hed a pleasant sort o' way with him, the minister had, and Huldy had got to likin' to be with him, and it all come over her that perhaps she ought to go away; and her throat kind o' filled up so she could n't hardly speak; and, says she, 'I can't sing to-night.'

"Says he, 'You don't know how much good your singin' has done me, nor how much good *you* have done me in

all ways, Huldy. I wish I knew how to show my gratitude.'

"'O sir!' says Huldy, '*is* it improper for me to be here?'

"'No dear,' says the minister, 'but ill-natured folks will talk; but there is one way we can stop it, Huldy — if you will marry me. You'll make me very happy, and I'll do all I can to make you happy. Will you?'

"Wal, Huldy never told me jist what she said to the minister, — gals never does give you the particulars of them 'ere things jist as you 'd like 'em, — only I know the upshot and the hull on 't was, that Huldy she did a consid-'able lot o' clear starchin' and ironin' the next two days; and the Friday o' next week the minister and she rode over together to Dr. Lothrop's in Oldtown; and the doctor, he jist made 'em man and wife, 'spite of envy of the Jews,' as the hymn says. Wal, you 'd better believe there was a-starin' and a-wonderin' next Sunday mornin' when the second bell was a-tollin', and the minister walked up the broad aisle with Huldy, all in white, arm in arm with him, and he opened the minister's pew, and handed her in as if she was a princess; for, you see, Parson Carryl come of a good family, and was a born gentleman, and had a sort o' grand way o' bein' polite to women-folks. Wal, I guess there was a-rus'lin' among the bunnets. Mis' Pipperidge gin a great bounce, like corn poppin' on a shovel, and her eyes glared through her glasses at Huldy as if they 'd 'a' sot her afire; and everybody in the meetin'-house was a-starin', I tell yew. But they could n't none of 'em say nothin' agin Huldy's looks; for there wa'n't a crimp nor a frill about her that wa'n't jis' *so;* and her frock was white as the driven snow, and she had her bunnet all trimmed up with white ribbins; and all the fellows said the old doctor had stole a march, and got the handsomest gal in the parish.

"Wal, arter meetin' they all come round the Parson and Huldy at the door, shakin' hands and laughin'; for by that time they was about agreed that they 'd got to let putty well alone.

"'Why, Parson Carryl,' says Mis' Deakin Blodgett, 'how you 've come it over us.'

"'Yes,' says the Parson, with a kind o' twinkle in his eye. 'I thought,' says he, 'as folks wanted to talk about Huldy and me, I 'd give 'em somethin' wuth talkin' about.'"

IV

THE WIDOW'S BANDBOX

"LORDY massy! Stick yer hat into the nor'east, Horace, and see 'f ye can't stop out this 'ere wind. I'm eenymost used up with it."

So spake Sam Lawson, contemplating mournfully a new broad-brimmed straw hat in which my soul was rejoicing.

It was the dripping end of a sour November afternoon, which closed up a "spell o' weather" that had been steadily driving wind and rain for a week past; and we boys sought the shelter and solace of his shop, and, opening the door, let in the wind aforesaid.

Sam had been all day in one of his periodical fits of desperate industry. The smoke and sparks had been seen flying out of his shop-chimney in a frantic manner; and the blows of his hammer had resounded with a sort of feverish persistence, intermingled with a doleful wailing of psalm-tunes of the most lugubrious description.

These fits of industry on Sam's part were an affliction to us boys, especially when they happened to come on Saturday: for Sam was as much a part of our Saturday-afternoon calculations as if we had a regular deed of property in him; and we had been all day hanging round his shop, looking in from time to time, in the vague hope that he would propose something to brighten up the dreary monotony of a holiday in which it had been impossible to go anywhere or do anything.

"Sam, ain't you coming over to tell us some stories to-night?"

"Bless your soul and body, boys! life ain't made to be spent tellin' stories. Why, I shall hev to be up here workin' till arter twelve o'clock," said Sam, who was suddenly possessed with a spirit of the most austere diligence. "Here I be up to my neck in work, — things kind o' comin' in a heap together. There 's Mis' Cap'n Broad's andirons, she sent word she must have 'em to-night; and there 's Lady Lothrop, she wants her warmin'-pan right off; they can't non' on 'em wait a minit longer. I 've ben a-drivin' and workin' all day like a nigger-slave. Then there was Jeduth Pettybone, he brought down them colts to-day, and I worked the biggest part o' the mornin' shoein' on 'em; and then Jeduth he said he could n't make change to pay me, so there wa'n't nothin' comin' in for 't; and then Hepsy she kep' a-jawin' at me all dinner-time 'bout that. Why, I wa'n't to blame now, was I? I can't make everybody do jest right and pay regular, can I? So ye see it goes, boys, gettin' yer bread by the sweat o' your brow; and sometimes sweatin' and not gettin' yer bread. That 'ere 's what I call the *cuss*, the 'riginal cuss, that come on man for hearkenin' to the voice o' his wife, — that 'ere was what did it. It allers kind o' riles me up with Mother Eve when I think on't. The women hain't no bisness to fret as they do, 'cause they sot this 'ere state o' things goin' in the fust place."

"But, Sam, Aunt Lois and Aunt Nabby are both going over to Miss Mehitable's to tea. Now, you just come over and eat supper with us and tell us a story, do."

"Gone out to tea, be they?" said Sam, relaxing his hammering, with a brightening gleam stealing gradually across his lanky visage. "Wal, that 'ere looks like a providential openin', to be sure. Wal, I guess I 'll come. What 's the use o' never havin' a good time? Ef you work yourself up into shoe-strings you don't get no thanks for it, and things in this world 's 'bout as broad as they is long: the women 'll scold, turn 'em which way ye will. A good mug

o' cider and some cold victuals over to the Deacon's 'll kind o' comfort a feller up; and your granny she 's sort o' merciful, she don't rub it into a fellow all the time like Miss Lois."

"Now, let 's see, boys," said Sam, when a comfortable meal of pork and beans had been disposed of, and a mug of cider was set down before the fire to warm. "I s'pect ye 'll like to hear a Down-East story to-night."

Of course we did, and tumbled over each other in our eagerness to get the nearest place to the narrator.

Sam's method of telling a story was as leisurely as that of some modern novel-writers. He would take his time for it, and proceed by easy stages. It was like the course of a dreamy, slow-moving river through a tangled meadow-flat, — not a rush nor a bush but was reflected in it; in short, Sam gave his philosophy of matters and things in general as he went along, and was especially careful to impress an edifying moral.

"Wal, ye see, boys, ye know I was born down to Newport, — there where it 's all ships and shipping, and sich. My old mother she kep' a boardin'-house for sailors down there. Wal, ye see, I rolled and tumbled round the world pretty consid'able afore I got settled down here in Oldtown.

"Ye see, my mother she wanted to bind me out to a blacksmith, but I kind o' sort o' did n't seem to take to it. It was kind o' hard work, and boys is apt to want to take life easy. Wal, I used to run off to the seashore, and lie stretched out on them rocks there, and look off on the water; and it did use to look so sort o' blue and peaceful, and the ships come a-sailin' in and out so sort o' easy and natural, that I felt as if that 'ere 'd be jest the easiest kind o' life a fellow could have. All he had to do was to get aboard one o' them ships, and be off seekin' his fortin at t'other end o' the rainbow, where gold grows on bushes and there 's valleys o' diamonds.

"So, nothin' would do but I gin my old mother the slip; and away I went to sea, with my duds tied up in a han'-kercher.

"I tell ye what, boys, ef ye want to find an easy life, don't ye never go to sea. I tell ye, life on shipboard ain't what it looks to be on shore. I had n't been aboard more 'n three hours afore I was the sickest critter that ever ye did see; and I tell you, I did n't get no kind o' compassion. Cap'ns and mates they allers thinks boys hain't no kind o' business to have no bowels nor nothin', and they put it on 'em sick or well. It 's jest a kick here, and a cuff there, and a twitch by the ear in t'other place; one a-shovin' on 'em this way, and another hittin' on 'em a clip, and all growlin' from mornin' to night. I believe the way my ears got so long was bein' hauled out o' my berth by 'em: that 'ere 's a sailor's regular way o' wakin' up a boy.

"Wal, by time I got to the Penobscot country, all I wanted to know was how to get back ag'in. That 'ere 's jest the way folks go all their lives, boys. It 's all fuss, fuss, and stew, stew, till ye get somewhere; and then it 's fuss, fuss, and stew, stew, to get back ag'in; jump here and scratch yer eyes out, and jump there and scratch 'em in ag'in, — that 'ere 's life.

"Wal, I kind o' poked round in Penobscot country till I got a berth on The Brilliant that was lyin' at Camden, goin' to sail to Boston.

"Ye see, The Brilliant she was a tight little sloop in the government service: 't was in the war-times, ye see, and Commodore Tucker that is now (he was Cap'n Tucker then), he had the command on her, — used to run up and down all the coast takin' observations o' the British, and keepin' his eye out on 'em and givin' on 'em a nip here and a clip there, 'cording as he got a good chance. Why, your grand'ther knew old Commodore Tucker. It was he that took Dr. Franklin, our Minister, to France, and dodged all

the British vessels, right in the middle o' the war. I tell you, that 'ere was like runnin' through the drops in a thunder-shower. He got chased by the British ships pretty consid'able, but he was too spry for 'em. Arter the war was over, Commodore Tucker took over John Adams, our fust Minister to England. A dreffful smart man the Commodore was, but he most like to 'a' ben took in this 'ere time I 'm a-tellin' ye about, and all 'cause he was sort o' soft-hearted to the women. Tom Toothacre told me the story. Tom he was the one that got me the berth on the ship. Ye see, I used to know Tom at Newport; and once when he took sick there my mother nussed him up, and that was why Tom was friends with me and got me the berth, and kep' me warm in it too. Tom he was one of your rael Maine boys, that 's hatched out, so to speak, in water like ducks. He was born away down there on Harpswell P'int; and they say, if ye throw one o' them Harpswell babies into the sea, he 'll take to it nateral, and swim like a cork: ef they hit their heads agin a rock it only dents the rock, but don't hurt the baby. Tom he was a great character on the ship. He could see further, and knew more 'bout wind and water, than most folks: the officers took Tom's judgment, and the men all went by his say. My mother she chalked a streak o' good luck for me when she nussed up Tom.

"Wal, we wus a-lyin' at Camden there, one arternoon, goin' to sail for Boston that night. It was a sort o' soft, pleasant arternoon, kind o' still, and there wa'n't nothin' a-goin' on but jest the hens a-craw-crawin', and a-h'istin' up one foot, and holdin' it a spell 'cause they did n't know when to set it down, and the geese a-sissin' and a-pickin' at the grass. Ye see, Camden was n't nothin' of a place, — 't was jest as if somebody had emptied out a pocketful o' houses and forgot 'em. There were n't nothin' a-stirrin' or goin' on; and so we was all took aback, when 'bout four

o'clock in the arternoon there come a boat alongside, with a tall, elegant lady in it, all dressed in deep mournin'. She rared up sort o' princess-like, and come aboard our ship, and wanted to speak to Cap'n Tucker. Where she come from, or what she wanted, or where she was goin' to, we none on us knew: she kep' her veil down so we could n't get sight o' her face. All was, she must see Cap'n Tucker alone right away.

"Wal, Cap'n Tucker he was like the generality o' cap'ns. He was up to 'bout everything that any *man* could do, but it was pretty easy for a woman to come it over him. Ye see, cap'ns they don't see women as men do ashore. They don't have enough of 'em to get tired on 'em; and every woman 's an angel to a sea-cap'n. Any way, the cap'n he took her into his cabin, and he sot her a chair, and was her humble servant to command, and what would she have of him? And we was all a-winkin', and a-nudgin' each other, and a-peekin' to see what was to come o' it. And she see it; and so she asks, in a sort o' princess' way, to speak to the cap'n alone; and so the doors was shut, and we was left to our own ideas, and a-wonderin' what it was all to be about.

"Wal, you see, it come out arterwards all about what went on; and things went this way. Jest as soon as the doors was shut, and she was left alone with the cap'n, she busted out a-cryin' and a-sobbin' fit to break her heart.

"Wal, the cap'n he tried to comfort her up: but no, she would n't be comforted, but went on a-weepin' and a-wailin', and a-wringin' on her hands, till the poor cap'n's heart was a'most broke; for the cap'n was the tenderest-hearted critter that could be, and could n't bear to see a child or a woman in trouble noways.

"'O cap'n!' said she, 'I 'm the most unfortunate woman. I 'm all alone in the world,' says she, 'and I don't know what 'll become of me ef you don't keep me,' says she.

"Wal, the cap'n thought it was time to run up his colors; and so says he, 'Ma'am, I 'm a married man, and love my wife,' says he, 'and so I can feel for all women in distress,' says he.

"'Oh well, then!' says she, 'you can feel for me, and know how to pity me. My dear husband 's just died suddenly when he was up the river. He was took with the fever in the woods. I nussed him day and night,' says she; 'but he died there in a mis'able little hut far from home and friends,' says she; 'and I 've brought his body down with me, hopin' Providence would open some way to get it back to our home in Boston. And now, cap'n, you must help me.'

"Then the cap'n see what she was up to; and he hated to do it, and tried to cut her off o' askin'; but she wa'n't to be put off.

"'Now, cap'n,' says she, 'ef you 'll take me and the body o' my husband on board to-night, I 'd be willin' to reward you to any amount. Money would be no object to me,' says she.

"Wal, you see, the cap'n he kind o' hated to do it; and he hemmed and hawed, and he tried to 'pologize. He said 't was a government vessel, and he did n't know as he had a right to use it. He said sailors was apt to be superstitious; and he did n't want 'em to know as there was a corpse on board.

"'Wal,' says she, 'why need they know?' For, you see, she was up to every dodge; and she said she 'd come along with it at dusk, in a box, and have it just carried to a state-room, and he need n't tell nobody what it was.

"Wal, Cap'n Tucker he hung off; and he tried his best to persuade her to have a funeral, all quiet, there at Camden. He promised to get a minister, and 'tend to it, and wait a day till it was all over, and then take her on to Boston free gratis. But 't was all no go. She would n't

hear a word to 't. And she reeled off the talk to him by the yard. And, when talk failed, she took to her water-works again, till finally the cap'n said his resolution was clean washed away, and he jest give up hook and line; and so 't was all settled and arranged, that, when evening come, she was to be alongside with her boat, and took aboard.

"When she come out o' the cap'n's room to go off, I see Tom Toothacre a-watchin' on her. He stood there by the railin's a-shavin' up a plug o' 'baccy to put in his pipe. He did n't say a word; but he sort o' took the measure o' that 'ere woman with his eye, and kept a-follerin' on her.

"She had a fine sort o' lively look, carried her head up and shoulders back, and stepped as if she had steel springs in her heels.

"'Wal, Tom, what do ye say to her?' says Ben Bowdin.

"'I don't say nothin',' says Tom, and he lit his pipe; 't ain't my business,' says he.

"'Wal, what do you think?' says Ben. Tom gin a h'ist to his trousers.

"'My thoughts is my own,' says he; 'and I calculate to keep 'em to myself,' says he. And then he jest walked to the side of the vessel, and watched the woman a-gettin' ashore. There was a queer kind o' look in Tom's eye.

"Wal, the cap'n he was dreffful sort o' oneasy arter she was gone. He had a long talk in the cabin with Mr. More, the fust officer; and there was a sort o' stir aboard as if somethin' was a-goin' to happen, we could n't jest say what it was.

"Sometimes it seems as if, when things is goin' to happen, a body kind o' feels 'em comin' in the air. We boys was all that way; o' course we did n't know nothin' 'bout what the woman wanted, or what she come for, or whether she was comin' ag'in; 'n fact, we did n't know nothin'

about it, and yet we sort o' expected suthin' to come o' it; and suthin' did come, sure enough.

"Come on night, jest at dusk, we see a boat comin' alongside; and there, sure enough, was the lady in it.

"'There, she 's comin' ag'in,' says I to Tom Toothacre.

"'Yes, and brought her baggage with her,' says Tom; and he p'inted down to a long, narrow pine box that was in the boat beside her.

"Jest then the cap'n called on Mr. More, and he called on Tom Toothacre; and among 'em they lowered a tackle, and swung the box aboard, and put it in the state-room right alongside the cap'n's cabin.

"The lady she thanked the cap'n and Mr. More, and her voice was jest as sweet as any nightingale; and she went into the state-room arter they put the body in, and was gone ever so long with it. The cap'n and Mr. More they stood a-whisperin' to each other, and every once in a while they 'd kind o' nod at the door where the lady was.

"Wal, by and by she come out with her han'kerchief to her eyes, and come on deck, and begun talkin' to the cap'n and Mr. More, and a-wishin' all kinds o' blessin's on their heads.

"Wal, Tom Toothacre did n't say a word, good or bad; but he jest kep' a-lookin' at her, watchin' her as a cat watches a mouse. Finally we up sail, and started with a fair breeze. The lady she kep' a-walkin' up and down, up and down, and every time she turned on her heel, I saw Tom a-lookin' arter her and kind o' noddin' to himself.

"'What makes you look arter her so, Tom?' says I to him.

"''Cause I think she *wants* lookin' arter,' says Tom. 'What 's more,' says he, 'if the cap'n don't look sharp arter her the devil 'll have us all afore mornin'. I tell ye, Sam, there 's mischief under them petticuts.'

"'Why, what do ye think?' says I.

"'Think! I don't think, I knows! That 'ere 's no gal,

nor widder neither, if my name's Tom Toothacre! Look at her walk; look at the way she turns on her heel! I've been a-watchin' on her. There ain't no woman livin' with a step like that!' says he.

"'Wal, who should the critter be, then?' says I.

"'Wal,' says Tom, 'ef that 'ere ain't a British naval officer, I lose my bet. I've been used to the ways on 'em, and I knows their build and their step.'

"'And what do you suppose she's got in that long box?' says I.

"'What has she got?' says Tom. 'Wal, folks might say none o' my bisness; but I s'pects it'll turn out some o' my bisness, and yourn too, if he don't look sharp arter it,' says Tom. 'It's no good, that 'ere box ain't.'

"'Why don't you speak to Mr. More?' says I.

"'Wal, you see she's a-chipperin' round and a-makin' herself agreeable to both on 'em, you see; she don't mean to give nobody any chance for a talk with 'em; but I've got my eye on her, for all that. You see, I hain't no sort o' disposition to sarve out a time on one o' them British prison-ships,' says Tom Toothacre. 'It might be almighty handy for them British to have The Brilliant for a coast-vessel,' says he; 'but, ye see, it can't be spared jest yet. So, madam,' says he, 'I've got my eye on you.'

"Wal, Tom was as good as his word; for when Mr. More came towards him at the wheel, Tom he up and says to him, 'Mr. More,' says he, 'that 'ere big box in the state-room yonder wants lookin' into.'

"Tom was a sort o' privileged character, and had a way o' speakin' up that the officers took in good part, 'cause they knew he wus a fust-rate hand.

"Wal, Mr. More he looks mysterious; and says he, 'Tom, do the boys know what's in that 'ere box?'

"'I bet they don't,' says Tom. 'If they had, you would n't a got 'em to help it aboard.'

"'Wal, you see, poor woman,' says Mr. More to Tom, 'she was so distressed. She wanted to get her husband's body to Boston; and there wa'n't no other way, and so the cap'n let it come aboard. He did n't want the boys to suspect what it really was.'

"'Husband's body be hanged!' said Tom. 'Guess that 'ere corpse ain't so dead but what there 'll be a resurrection before mornin', if it ain't looked arter,' says he.

"'Why, what do you mean, Tom?' said Mr. More, all in a blue maze.

"'I mean, that 'ere gal that's ben a-switchin' her petticuts up and down our deck ain't no gal at all. That 'ere 's a British officer, Mr. More. You give my duty to the cap'n, and tell him to look into his widder's bandbox, and see what he 'll find there.'

"Wal, the mate he went and had a talk with the cap'n; and they 'greed between 'em that Mr. More was to hold her in talk while the cap'n went and took observations in the state-room.

"So, down the cap'n goes into the state-room to give a look at the box. Wal, he finds the state-room door all locked to be sure, and my lady had the key in her pocket; but then the cap'n he had a master key to it; and so he puts it in, and opens the door quite softly, and begins to take observations.

"Sure enough, he finds that the screws had been drawed from the top o' the box, showin' that the widder had been a tinkerin' on 't when they thought she was a-cryin' over it; and then, lookin' close, he see a bit o' twine goin' from a crack in the box out o' the winder, and up on deck.

"Wal, the cap'n he kind o' got in the sperit o' the thing; and he thought he 'd jest let the widder play her play out, and see what it would come to. So he jest calls Tom Toothacre down to him and whispered to him.

'Tom,' says he, 'you jest crawl under the berth in that 'ere state-room, and watch that 'ere box.' And Tom said he would.

"So Tom creeps under the berth, and lies there still as a mouse; and the cap'n he slips out and turns the key in the door, so that when madam comes down she should n't s'pect nothin'.

"Putty soon, sure enough, Tom heard the lock rattle, and the young widder come in; and then he heard a bit o' conversation between her and the corpse.

"'What time is it?' come in a kind o' hoarse whisper out o' the box.

"'Well, 'bout nine o'clock,' says she.

"'How long afore you 'll let me out?' says he.

"'Oh! you must have patience,' says she, 'till they 're all gone off to sleep; when there ain't but one man up. I can knock him down,' says she, 'and then I 'll pull the string for you.'

"'The devil you will, ma'am!' says Tom to himself, under the berth.

"'Well, it 's darned close here,' says the fellow in the box. He did n't say darned, boys; but he said a wickeder word that I can't repeat, noways," said Sam, in a parenthesis: "these 'ere British officers was dreffful swearin' critters.

"'You must have patience a while longer,' says the lady, 'till I pull the string.' Tom Toothacre lay there on his back a-laughin'.

"'Is everything goin' on right?' says the man in the box.

"'All straight,' says she: 'there don't none of 'em suspect.'

"'You bet,' says Tom Toothacre, under the berth; and he said he had the greatest mind to catch the critter by the feet as she was a-standin' there, but somehow thought it

would be better fun to see the thing through 'cording as they 'd planned it.

"Wal, then she went off switchin' and mincin' up to the deck ag'in, and a-flirtin' with the cap'n; for you see 't was 'greed to let 'em play their play out.

"Wal, Tom he lay there a-waitin'; and he waited and waited and waited, till he 'most got asleep; but finally he heard a stirrin' in the box, as if the fellah was a-gettin' up. Tom he jest crawled out still and kerful, and stood up tight agin the wall. Putty soon he hears a grunt, and he sees the top o' the box a-risin' up, and a man jest gettin' out on 't mighty still.

"Wal, Tom he waited till he got fairly out on to the floor, and had his hand on the lock o' the door, when he jumps on him, and puts both arms round him, and gin him a regular bear's hug.

"'Why, what 's this?' says the man.

"'Guess ye 'll find out, darn ye,' says Tom Toothacre. 'So, ye wanted our ship, did ye? Wal, ye jest can't have our ship,' says Tom, says he; and I tell you he jest run that 'ere fellow upstairs lickety-split, for Tom was strong as a giant.

"The fust thing they saw was Mr. More hed got the widder by both arms, and was tying on 'em behind her. 'Ye see, madam, your game 's up,' says Mr. More, 'but we 'll give ye a free passage to Boston, though,' says he: 'we wanted a couple o' prisoners about these days, and you 'll do nicely.'

"The fellers they was putty chopfallen, to be sure, and the one in women's clothes 'specially: 'cause when he was found out, he felt foolish enough in his petticuts; but they was both took to Boston, and given over as prisoners.

"Ye see, come to look into matters, they found these two young fellows, British officers, had formed a regular plot to take Cap'n Tucker's vessel, and run it into Halifax; and ye see, Cap'n Tucker he was so sort o' spry, and knew

all the Maine coast so well, and was so 'cute at dodgin' in and out all them little bays and creeks and places all 'long shore, that he made the British considerable trouble, 'cause wherever they did n't want him, that 's where he was sure to be.

"So they hatched up this 'ere plan. There was one or two British sailors had been and shipped aboard The Brilliant a week or two aforehand, and 't was suspected they was to have helped in the plot if things had gone as laid out; but I tell you, when the fellows see which way the cat jumped, they took pretty good care to say that they had n't nothin' to do with it. Oh no, by no manner o' means! Wal, o' course, ye know, it could n't be proved on 'em, and so we let it go.

"But I tell you, Cap'n Tucker he felt pretty cheap about his widder. The worst on 't was, they do say Ma'am Tucker got hold of it; and you might know if a woman got hold of a thing like that she 'd use it as handy as a cat would her claws. The women they can't no more help hittin' a fellow a clip and a rap when they 've fairly got him, than a cat when she 's ketched a mouse; and so I should n't wonder if the Commodore heard something about his widder every time he went home from his v'yages the longest day he had to live. I don't know nothin' 'bout it, ye know: I only kind o' jedge by what looks, as human natur' goes.

"But, Lordy massy! boys, 't wa'n't nothin' to be 'shamed of in the cap'n. Folks 'll have to answer for wus things at the last day than tryin' to do a kindness to a poor widder, now, I tell *you*. It 's better to be took in doin' a good thing, than never try to do good; and it 's my settled opinion," said Sam taking up his mug of cider and caressing it tenderly, "it 's my humble opinion, that the best sort o' folks is the easiest took in, 'specially by the women. I reelly don't think I should 'a' done a bit better myself."

V

CAPTAIN KIDD'S MONEY

One of our most favorite legendary resorts was the old barn.

Sam Lawson preferred it on many accounts. It was quiet and retired, that is to say, at such a distance from his own house, that he could not hear if Hepsy called ever so loudly, and farther off than it would be convenient for that industrious and painstaking woman to follow him. Then there was the soft fragrant cushion of hay, on which his length of limb could be easily bestowed.

Our barn had an upper loft with a swinging outer door that commanded a view of the old mill, the waterfall, and the distant windings of the river, with its grassy green banks, its graceful elm draperies, and its white flocks of water-lilies; and then on this Saturday afternoon we had Sam all to ourselves. It was a drowsy, dreamy October day, when the hens were lazily "craw-crawing," in a soft, conversational undertone with each other, as they scratched and picked the hayseed under the barn windows. Below in the barn black Cæsar sat quietly hatcheling flax, sometimes gurgling and giggling to himself with an overflow of that interior jollity with which he seemed to be always full. The African in New England was a curious contrast to everybody around him in the joy and satisfaction that he seemed to feel in the mere fact of being alive. Every white person was glad or sorry for some appreciable cause in the past, present, or future, which was capable of being definitely stated; but black Cæsar was in an eternal giggle and frizzle and simmer

of enjoyment for which he could give no earthly reason: he was an "embodied joy," like Shelley's skylark.

"Jest hear him," said Sam Lawson, looking pensively over the haymow, and strewing hayseed down on his wool. "How that 'ere critter seems to tickle and laugh all the while 'bout nothin'. Lordy massy, he don't seem never to consider that 'this life 's a dream, an empty show.'"

"Look here, Sam," we broke in, anxious to cut short a threatened stream of morality, "you promised to tell us about Captain Kidd, and how you dug for his money."

"Did I, now? Wal, boys, that 'ere history o' Kidd's is a warnin' to fellers. Why, Kidd had pious parents and Bible and sanctuary privileges when he was a boy, and yet come to be hanged. It 's all in this 'ere song I 'm a-goin' to sing ye. Lordy massy! I wish I had my bass-viol now. Cæsar," he said, calling down from his perch, "can't you strike the pitch o' 'Cap'n Kidd' on your fiddle?"

Cæsar's fiddle was never far from him. It was, in fact, tucked away in a nice little nook just over the manger; and he often caught an interval from his work to scrape a dancing-tune on it, keeping time with his heels, to our great delight.

A most wailing minor-keyed tune was doled forth, which seemed quite refreshing to Sam's pathetic vein, as he sang in his most lugubrious tones: —

"'My name was Robert Kidd
As I sailed, as I sailed,
My name was Robert Kidd;
God's laws I did forbid,
And so wickedly I did,
As I sailed, as I sailed.'

"Now ye see, boys, he 's a-goin' to tell how he abused his religious privileges; just hear now: —

'My father taught me well,
As I sailed, as I sailed;

My father taught me well
To shun the gates of hell,
But yet I did rebel,
As I sailed, as I sailed.

'He put a Bible in my hand,
As I sailed, as I sailed;
He put a Bible in my hand,
And I sunk it in the sand
Before I left the strand,
As I sailed, as I sailed.'

"Did ye ever hear o' such a hardened, contrary critter, boys? It 's awful to think on. Wal, ye see that 'ere 's the way fellers allers begin the ways o' sin, by turnin' their backs on the Bible and the advice o' pious parents. Now hear what he come to: —

'Then I murdered William More,
As I sailed, as I sailed;
I murdered William More,
And left him in his gore,
Not many leagues from shore,
As I sailed, as I sailed.

'To execution dock
I must go, I must go.
To execution dock,
While thousands round me flock,
To see me on the block,
I must go, I must go.'

"There was a good deal more on 't," said Sam, pausing, "but I don't seem to remember it; but it 's real solemn and affectin'."

"Who was Captain Kidd, Sam?" said I.

"Wal, he was an officer in the British navy, and he got to bein' a pirate: used to take ships and sink 'em, and murder the folks; and so they say he got no end o' money, — gold and silver and precious stones, as many as the Wise Men in the East. But ye see, what good did it all do him? He could n't use it, and dar's n't keep it; so he used to bury it in spots round here and there in the awfullest heathen way ye ever heard of. Why, they say he allers

used to kill one or two men or women or children of his prisoners, and bury with it, so that their sperits might keep watch on it ef anybody was to dig arter it. That 'ere thing has been tried and tried and tried, but no man nor mother's son on 'em ever got a cent that dug. 'T was tried here 'n Oldtown; and they come pretty nigh gettin' on 't, but it gin 'em the slip. Ye see, boys, *it 's the Devil's money*, and he holds a pretty tight grip on 't."

"Well, how was it about digging for it? Tell us, did you do it? Were you there? Did you see it? And why could n't they get it?" we both asked eagerly and in one breath.

"Why, Lordy massy! boys, your questions tumbles over each other thick as martins out o' a martin-box. Now, you jest be moderate and let alone, and I 'll tell you all about it from the beginnin' to the end. I did n't railly have no hand in 't, though I was knowin' to 't, as I be to most things that goes on round here; but my conscience would n't railly 'a' let me start on no sich undertakin'.

"Wal, the one that fust sot the thing a-goin' was old Mother Hokum, that used to live up in that little tumble-down shed by the cranberry-pond up beyond the spring pastur'. They had a putty bad name, them Hokums. How they got a livin' nobody knew; for they did n't seem to pay no attention to raisin' nothin' but childun, but the deuce knows, there was plenty o' them. Their old hut was like a rabbit-pen: there was a tow-head to every crack and cranny. 'Member what old Cæsar said once when the word come to the store that old Hokum had got twins. 'S'pose de Lord knows best,' says Cæsar, 'but *I* thought dere was Hokums enough afore.' Wal, even poor workin' industrious folks like me finds it 's hard gettin' along when there 's so many mouths to feed. Lordy massy! there don't never seem to be no end on 't, and so it ain't wonderful, come to think on 't, ef folks like them Hokums gets

tempted to help along in ways that ain't quite right. Anyhow, folks did use to think that old Hokum was too sort o' familiar with their wood-piles 'long in the night, though they could n't never prove it on him; and when Mother Hokum come to houses round to wash, folks use sometimes to miss pieces, here and there, though they never could find 'em on her; then they was allers a-gettin' in debt here and a-gettin' in debt there. Why, they got to owin' two dollars to Joe Gidger for butcher's meat. Joe was sort o' good-natured and let 'em have meat, 'cause Hokum he promised so fair to pay; but he could n't never get it out o' him. 'Member once Joe walked clear up to the cranberry-pond arter that 'ere two dollars; but Mother Hokum she see him a-comin' jest as he come past the juniper-bush on the corner. She says to Hokum, 'Get into bed, old man, quick, and let me tell the story,' says she. So she covered him up; and when Gidger come in she come up to him, and says she, 'Why, Mr. Gidger, I 'm jest ashamed to see ye: why, Mr. Hokum was jest a-comin' down to pay ye that 'ere money last week, but ye see he was took down with the small-pox' — Joe did n't hear no more; he just turned round, and he streaked it out that 'ere door with his coat-tails flyin' out straight ahind him; and old Mother Hokum she jest stood at the window holdin' her sides and laughin' fit to split, to see him run. That 'ere 's jest a sample o' the ways them Hokums cut up.

"Wal, you see, boys, there 's a queer kind o' rock down on the bank o' the river, that looks sort o' like a gravestone. The biggest part on 't is sunk down under ground, and it 's pretty well growed over with blackberry-vines; but, when you scratch the bushes away, they used to make out some queer marks on that 'ere rock. They was sort o' lines and crosses; and folks would have it that them was Kidd's private marks, and that there was one o' the places where he hid his money.

"Wal, there 's no sayin' fairly how it come to be thought so; but fellers used to say so, and they used sometimes to talk it over to the tahvern, and kind o' wonder whether or no, if they should dig, they would n't come to suthin'.

"Wal, old Mother Hokum she heard on 't, and she was a sort o' enterprisin' old crittur: fact was, she had to be, 'cause the young Hokums was jest like bag-worms, the more they growed the more they eat, and I expect she found it pretty hard to fill their mouths; and so she said if there *was* anything under that 'ere rock, they 'd as good 's have it as the Devil; and so she did n't give old Hokum no peace o' his life, but he must see what there was there.

"Wal, I was with 'em the night they was a-talkin' on 't up. Ye see, Hokum he got thirty-seven cents' worth o' lemons and sperit. I see him goin' by as I was out a-splittin' kindlin's; and says he, 'Sam, you jest go 'long up to our house to-night,' says he: 'Toddy Whitney and Harry Wiggin 's comin' up, and we 're goin' to have a little suthin' hot,' says he; and he kind o' showed me the lemons and sperit. And I told him I guessed I would go 'long. Wal, I kind o' wanted to see what they 'd be up to, ye know.

"Wal, come to find out, they was a-talkin' about Cap'n Kidd's treasures, and layin' out how they should get it, and a-settin' one another on with gret stories about it.

"'I 've heard that there was whole chists full o' gold guineas,' says one.

"'And I 've heard o' gold bracelets and ear-rings and finger-rings all sparklin' with diamonds,' says another.

"'Maybe it 's old silver plate from some o' them old West Indian grandees,' says another.

"'Wal, whatever it is,' says Mother Hokum, 'I want to be into it,' says she.

"'Wal, Sam, won't you jine?' says they.

"'Wal, boys,' says I, 'I kind o' don't feel jest like

j'inin'. I sort o' ain't clear about the rights on 't: seems to me it 's mighty nigh like goin' to the Devil for money.'

"'Wal,' says Mother Hokum, 'what if 't is? Money 's money, get it how ye will; and the Devil's money 'll buy as much meat as any. I 'd go to the Devil if he gave good money.'

"'Wal, I guess I would n't,' says I. 'Don't you 'member the sermon Parson Lothrop preached about hastin' to be rich, last sabba' day?'

"'Parson Lothrop be hanged!' says she. 'Wal, now,' says she, 'I like to see a parson with his silk stockin's and great gold-headed cane, a-lollopin' on his carriage behind his fat, prancin' hosses, comin' to meetin' to preach to us poor folks not to want to be rich! How 'd he like it to have forty-'leven children, and nothin' to put onto 'em or into 'em, I wonder? Guess if Lady Lothrop had to rub and scrub, and wear her fingers to the bone as I do, she 'd want to be rich; and I guess the Parson, if he could n't get a bellyful for a week, would be for diggin' up Kidd's money, or doing 'most anything else to make the pot bile.'

"'Wal,' says I, 'I 'll kind o' go with ye, boys, and sort o' see how things turn out; but I guess I won't take no shere in 't,' says I.

"Wal, they got it all planned out. They was to wait till the full moon, and then they was to get Primus King to go with 'em and help do the diggin'. Ye see, Hokum and Toddy Whitney and Wiggin are all putty softly fellers, and hate dreffully to work; and I tell you the Kidd money ain't to be got without a pretty tough piece o' diggin'. Why, it 's jest like diggin' a well to get at it. Now, Primus King was the master hand for diggin' wells, and so they said they 'd get him by givin' on him a shere.

"Harry Wiggin he did n't want no nigger a-sherin' in it, he said; but Toddy and Hokum they said that when there was such stiff diggin' to be done, they did n't care if they did go in with a nigger.

"Wal, Wiggin he said he had n't no objection to havin' the nigger do the diggin', it was sherin' the profits he objected to.

"'Wal,' said Hokum, 'you can't get him without,' says he. 'Primus knows too much,' says he: 'you can't fool him.' Finally they 'greed that they was to give Primus twenty dollars, and shere the treasure 'mong themselves.

"Come to talk to Primus, he would n't stick in a spade, unless they 'd pay him aforehand. Ye see, Primus was up to 'em; he knowed about Gidger, and there wa'n't none on 'em that was particular good pay; and so they all jest hed to rake and scrape, and pay him down the twenty dollars among 'em; and they 'greed for the fust full moon, at twelve o'clock at night, the 9th of October.

"Wal, ye see, I had to tell Hepsy I was goin' out to watch. Wal, so I was; but not jest in the way she took it: but Lordy massy! a feller has to tell his wife suthin' to keep her quiet, ye know, 'specially Hepsy.

"Wal, wal, of all the moonlight nights that ever I did see, I never did see one equal to that. Why, you could see the color o' everything. I 'member I could see how the huckleberry-bushes on the rock was red as blood when the moonlight shone through 'em; 'cause the leaves, you see, had begun to turn.

"Goin' on our way we got to talkin' about the sperits.

"'I ain't afraid on 'em,' says Hokum. 'What harm can a sperit do me?' says he. 'I don't care ef there 's a dozen on 'em;' and he took a swig at his bottle.

"'Oh! there ain't no sperits,' says Harry Wiggin. 'That 'ere talk 's all nonsense;' and he took a swig at *his* bottle.

"'Wal,' says Toddy, 'I don't know 'bout that 'ere. Me and Ike Sanders has seen the sperits in the Cap'n Brown house. We thought we 'd jest have a peek into the window one night; and there was a whole flock o' black colts without no heads on come rushin' on us and knocked us flat.'

"'I expect you 'd been at the tahvern,' said Hokum.

"'Wal, yes, we had; but them was sperits: we wa'n't drunk, now; we was jest as sober as ever we was.'

"'Wal, they won't get away my money,' says Primus, 'for I put it safe away in Dinah's teapot afore I come out;' and then he showed all his ivories from ear to ear. 'I think all this 'ere 's sort o' foolishness,' said Primus.

"'Wal,' says I, 'boys, I ain't a-goin' to have no part or lot in this 'ere matter, but I 'll jest lay it off to you how it 's to be done. Ef Kidd's money is under this rock, there 's sperits that watch it, and you must n't give 'em no advantage. There must n't be a word spoke from the time ye get sight o' the treasure till ye get it safe up on to firm ground,' says I. 'Ef ye do, it 'll vanish right out o' sight. I 've talked with them that has dug down to it and seen it; but they allers lost it, 'cause they 'd call out and say suthin'; and the minute they spoke, away it went.'

"Wal, so they marked off the ground; and Primus he begun to dig, and the rest kind o' sot round. It was so still it was kind o' solemn. Ye see, it was past twelve o'clock, and every critter in Oldtown was asleep; and there was two whippoorwills on the great Cap'n Brown elm-trees, that kep' a-answerin' each other back and forward sort o' solitary like; and then every once in a while there 'd come a sort o' strange whisper up among the elm-tree leaves, jest as if there was talkin' goin' on; and every time Primus struck his spade into the ground it sounded sort o' holler, jest as if he 'd been a-diggin' a grave. 'It 's kind o' melancholy,' says I, 'to think o' them poor critters that had to be killed and buried jest to keep this 'ere treasure. What awful things 'll be brought to light in the judgment day! Them poor critters they loved to live and hated to die as much as any on us; but no, they hed to die jest to satisfy that critter's wicked will. I 've heard them as thought they could tell the Cap'n Kidd places by layin' their ear to the ground at midnight, and they 'd hear groans and wailin's.'"

"Why, Sam! were there really people who could tell where Kidd's money was?" I here interposed.

"Oh, sartin! why, yis. There was Shebna Bascom, he was one. Shebna could always tell what was under the earth. He 'd cut a hazel-stick and hold it in his hand when folks was wantin' to know where to dig wells; and that 'ere stick would jest turn in his hand, and p'int down till it would fairly grind the bark off; and ef you dug in that place you was sure to find a spring. Oh yis! Shebna he 's told many where the Kidd money was, and been with 'em when they dug for it; but the pester on 't was they allers lost it, 'cause they would some on 'em speak afore they thought."

"But, Sam, what about this digging? Let 's know what came of it," said we, as Sam appeared to lose his way in his story.

"Wal, ye see, they dug down about five feet, when Primus he struck his spade smack on something that chinked like iron.

"Wal, then Hokum and Toddy Whitney was into the hole in a minute; they made Primus get out, and they took the spade, 'cause they wanted to be sure to come on it themselves.

"Wal, they begun, and they dug and he scraped, and sure enough they come to a gret iron pot as big as your granny's dinner-pot, with an iron bale to it.

"Wal, then they put down a rope, and he put the rope through the handle; then Hokum and Toddy they clambered upon the bank, and all on 'em began to draw up jest as still and silent as could be. They drawed and they drawed, till they jest got it even with the ground, when Toddy spoke out all in a tremble, 'There,' says he, '*we 've got it!*' And the minit he spoke they was both struck by *suthin'* that knocked 'em clean over; and the rope give a crack like a pistol-shot, and broke short off; and

the pot went down, down, down, and they heard it goin', jink, jink, jink; and it went way down into the earth, and the ground closed over it; and then they heard the screechin'est laugh ye ever did hear."

"I want to know, Sam, did you see that pot?" I exclaimed at this part of the story.

"Wal, no, I did n't. Ye see, I jest happened to drop asleep while they was diggin', I was so kind o' tired, and I did n't wake up till it was all over.

"I was waked up, 'cause there was consid'able of a scuffle; for Hokum was so mad at Toddy for speakin', that he was a-fistin' on him; and old Primus he jest haw-hawed and laughed. 'Wal, I got *my* money safe, anyhow,' says he.

"'Wal, come to,' says I. 'T ain't no use cryin' for spilt milk: you 've jest got to turn in now and fill up this 'ere hole, else the selectmen 'll be down on ye.'

"'Wal,' says Primus, 'I did n't engage to fill up no holes;' and he put his spade on his shoulder and trudged off.

"Wal, it was putty hard work, fillin' in that hole; but Hokum and Toddy and Wiggin had to do it, 'cause they did n't want to have everybody a-laughin' at 'em; and I kind o' tried to set it home to 'em, showin' on 'em that 't was all for the best.

"'Ef you 'd 'a' been left to get that 'ere money, there 'd 'a' come a cuss with it,' says I. 'It shows the vanity o' hastin' to be rich.'

"'Oh, you shet up!' says Hokum, says he. 'You never hasted to anything,' says he. Ye see, he was riled, that 's why he spoke so."

"Sam," said we, after maturely reflecting over the story, "what do you suppose was in that pot?"

"Lordy massy, boys! ye never will be done askin' questions. Why, how should I know?"

VI

"MIS' ELDERKIN'S PITCHER"

"Ye see, boys," said Sam Lawson, as we were gathering young wintergreen on a sunny hillside in June, — "ye see, folks don't allers know what their marcies is when they sees 'em. Folks is kind o' blinded; and, when a providence comes along, they don't seem to know how to take it, and they growl and grumble about what turns out the best things that ever happened to 'em in their lives. It 's like Mis' Elderkin's pitcher."

"What about Mis' Elderkin's pitcher?" said both of us in one breath.

"Did n't I never tell ye, now?" said Sam: "why I wanter know!"

No, we were sure he never had told us; and Sam, as usual, began clearing the ground by a thorough introduction, with statistical expositions.

"Wal, ye see, Mis' Elderkin she lives now over to Sherburne in about the handsomest house in Sherburne, — a high white house, with green blinds and white pillars in front, — and she rides out in her own kerridge; and Mr. Elderkin, he 's a deakin in the church, and a colonel in the malitia, and a s'lectman, and pretty much atop everything there is goin' in Sherburne, and it all come of that 'ere pitcher."

"What pitcher?" we shouted in chorus.

"Lordy massy! that 'ere 's jest what I 'm a-goin' to tell you about; but, ye see, a feller 's jest got to make a beginnin' to all things.

"Mis' Elderkin she thinks she 's a gret lady nowadays, I s'pose; but I 'member when she was Miry Brown over here 'n Oldtown, and I used to be waitin' on her to singing-school.

"Miry and I was putty good friends along in them days, — we was putty consid'able kind o' intimate. Fact is, boys, there was times in them days when I thought whether or no I would n't *take* Miry myself," said Sam, his face growing luminous with the pleasing idea of his former masculine attractions and privileges. "Yis," he continued, "there was a time when folks said I could 'a' hed Miry ef I 'd asked her; and I putty much think so myself, but I did n't say nothin' : marriage is allers kind o' ventursome; an' Miry had such up-and-down kind o' ways, I was sort o' 'fraid on 't.

"But Lordy massy! boys, you must n't never tell Hepsy I said so, 'cause she 'd be mad enough to bite a shingle-nail in two. Not that she sets so very gret by me neither; but then women's backs is allers up ef they think anybody else could 'a' hed you, whether they want you themselves or not.

"Ye see, Miry she was old Black Hoss John Brown's da'ter, and lived up there in that 'ere big brown house by the meetin'-house, that hes the red hollyhock in the front yard. Miry was about the handsomest gal that went into the singers' seat a Sunday.

"I tell you she wa'n't none o' your milk-and-sugar gals neither, — she was 'mazin' strong built. She was the strongest gal in her arms that I ever see. Why, I 've seen Miry take up a barrel o' flour, and lift it right into the kitchen; and it would jest make the pink come into her cheeks like two roses, but she never seemed to mind it a grain. She had a good strong back of her own, and she was straight as a poplar, with snappin' black eyes, and I tell you there was a snap to her tongue too. Nobody never got ahead o' Miry; she 'd give every fellow as good as he sent, but for all that she was a gret favorite.

"Miry was one o' your briery, scratchy gals, that seems to catch fellers in thorns. She allers fit and flouted her beaux, and the more she fit and flouted 'em the more they 'd be arter her. There wa'n't a gal in all Oldtown that led such a string o' fellers arter her; 'cause, you see, she 'd now and then throw 'em a good word over her shoulder, and then they 'd all fight who should get it, and she 'd jest laugh to see 'em do it.

"Why, there was Tom Sawin, he was one o' her beaux, and Jim Moss, and Ike Bacon; and there was a Boston boy, Tom Beacon, he came up from Cambridge to rusticate with Parson Lothrop; he thought he must have his say with Miry, but he got pretty well come up with. You see, he thought 'cause he was Boston born that he was kind o' aristocracy, and hed a right jest to pick and choose 'mong country gals; but the way he got come up with by Miry was too funny for anything."

"Do tell us about it," we said, as Sam made an artful pause, designed to draw forth solicitation.

"Wal, ye see, Tom Beacon he told Ike Bacon about it, and Ike he told me. 'T was this way. Ye see, there was a quiltin' up to Mis' Cap'n Broad's, and Tom Beacon he was there; and come to goin' home with the gals, Tom he cut Ike out, and got Miry all to himself; and 't was a putty long piece of a walk from Mis' Cap'n Broad's up past the swamp and the stone pastur' clear up to old Black Hoss John's.

"Wal, Tom he was in high feather 'cause Miry took him, so that he did n't reelly know how to behave; and so, as they was walkin' along past Parson Lothrop's apple orchard, Tom thought he 'd try bein' familiar, and he undertook to put his arm round Miry. Wal, if she did n't jest take that little fellow by his two shoulders and whirl him over the fence into the orchard quicker 'n no time. 'Why,' says Tom, 'the fust I knew I was lyin' on my back under the

apple-trees lookin' up at the stars.' Miry she jest walked off home and said nothin' to nobody, — it wa'n't her way to talk much about things; and, if it hed n't ben for Tom Beacon himself, nobody need 'a' known nothin' about it. Tom was a little fellow, you see, and 'mazin' good-natured, and one o' the sort that could n't keep nothin' to himself; and so he let the cat out o' the bag himself. Wal, there did n't nobody think the worse o' Miry. When fellers find a gal won't take saace from no man, they kind o' respect her; and then fellers allers thinks ef it hed ben *them*, now, things 'd 'a' been different. That 's jest what Jim Moss and Ike Bacon said: they said, why, Tom Beacon was a fool not to know better how to get along with Miry, — they never had no trouble. The fun of it was, that Tom Beacon himself was more crazy after her than he was afore; and they say he made Miry a right up-and-down offer, and Miry she jest would n't have him.

"Wal, you see, that went agin old Black Hoss John's idees: old Black Hoss was about as close as a nut and as contrairy as a pipperage-tree. You ought to 'a' seen him. Why, his face was all a perfect crisscross o' wrinkles. There wa'n't a spot where you could put a pin down that there wa'n't a wrinkle; and they used to say that he held on to every cent that went through his fingers till he 'd pinched it into two. You could n't say that his god was his belly, for he hed n't none, no more 'n an old file: folks said that he 'd starved himself till the moon 'd shine through him.

"Old Black Hoss was awfully grouty about Miry's refusin' Tom Beacon, 'cause there was his houses and lots o' land in Boston. A dreffful worldly old critter Black Hoss John was: he was like the rich fool in the gospel. Wal, he 's dead and gone now, poor critter, and what good has it all done him? It 's as the Scriptur' says, 'He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.'

"Miry hed a pretty hard row to hoe with old Black Hoss John. She was up early and down late, and kep' everything a-goin'. She made the cheese and made the butter, and between spells she braided herself handsome straw bunnets, and fixed up her clothes; and somehow she worked it so when she sold her butter and cheese that there was something for ribbins and flowers. You know the Scriptur' says, 'Can a maid forget her ornaments?' Wal, Miry did n't. I 'member I used to lead the singin' in them days, and Miry she used to sing counter, so we sot putty near together in the singers' seats; and I used to think Sunday mornin's when she come to meetin' in her white dress and her red cheeks, and her bunnet all tipped off with laylock, that 't was for all the world jest like sunshine to have her come into the singers' seats. Them was the days that I did n't improve my privileges, boys," said Sam, sighing deeply. "There was times that ef I 'd a spoke, there 's no knowin' what might n't 'a' happened, 'cause, you see, boys, I was better lookin' in them days than I be now. Now you mind, boys, when you grow up, ef you get to waitin' on a nice gal, and you 're 'most a mind to speak up to her, don't you go and put it off, 'cause, ef you do, you may live to repent it.

"Wal, you see, from the time that Bill Elderkin come and took the academy, I could see plain enough that it was time for me to hang up my fiddle. Bill he used to set in the singers' seats, too, and he would have it that he sung tenor. He no more sung tenor than a skunk-blackbird, but he made b'lieve he did, jest to git next to Miry in the singers' seats. They used to set there in the seats a-writin' backward and forward to each other till they tore out all the leaves of the hymn-books, and the singin'-books besides. Wal, I never thought that the house o' the Lord was jest the place to be courtin' in, and I used to get consid'able shocked at the way things went on atween 'em. Why,

they 'd be a-writin' all sermon-time; and I 've seen him a-lookin' at her all through the long prayer in a way that wa'n't right, considerin' they was both professors of religion. But then the fact was, old Black Hoss John was to blame for it, 'cause he never let 'em have no chance to hum. Ye see, old Black Hoss he was sot agin Elderkin, 'cause he was poor. You see, his mother, the old Widdah Elderkin, she was jest about the poorest, peakedest old body over to Sherburne, and went out to days' works; and Bill Elderkin he was all for books and larnin', and old Black Hoss John he thought it was just shiftlessness, but Miry she thought he was a genius; and she got it sot in her mind that he was goin' to be President o' the United States, or some sich.

"Wal, old Black Hoss he wa'n't none too polite to Miry's beaux in gineral, but when Elderkin used to come to see her he was snarlier than a saw: he had n't a good word for him noways; and he 'd rake up the fire right before his face and eyes, and rattle about fastenin' up the windows, and tramp up to bed, and call down the chamber-stairs to Miry to go to bed, and was sort o' aggravatin' every way.

"Wal, ef folks wants to get a gal set on havin' a man, that 'ere 's the way to go to work. Miry had a consid'able stiff will of her own; and ef she did n't care about Tom Beacon before, she hated him now; and if she liked Bill Elderkin before, she was clean gone over to him now. And so she took to goin' to the Wednesday-evenin' lecture, and the Friday-evenin' prayer-meetin', and the singin'-school, jest as regular as a clock, and so did he; and arterwards they allers walked home the longest way. Fathers may jest as well let their gals be courted in the house, peaceable, 'cause, if they can't be courted there, they 'll find places where they can be: it 's jest human natur'.

"Wal, come fall, Elderkin he went to college up to

Brunswick; and then I used to see the letters as regular up to the store every week, comin' in from Brunswick, and old Black Hoss John he see 'em too, and got a way of droppin' on 'em in his coat-pocket when he came up to the store, and folks used to say that the letters that went into his coat-pocket did n't get to Miry. Anyhow, Miry she says to me one day, says she, 'Sam, you 're up round the post-office a good deal,' says she. 'I wish, if you see any letters for me, you 'd jest bring 'em along.' I see right into it, and I told her to be sure I would; and so I used to have the carryin' of great thick letters every week. Wal, I was waitin' on Hepsy along about them times, and so Miry and I kind o' sympathized. Hepsy was a pretty gal, and I thought it was all best as 't was; any way, I knew I could n't get Miry, and I could get Hepsy, and that made all the difference in the world.

"Wal, that next winter old Black Hoss was took down with rheumatism, and I tell you if Miry did n't have a time on 't! He wa'n't noways sweet-tempered when he was well; but come to be crooked up with the rheumatis' and kep' awake nights, it seemed as if he was determined there should n't nobody have no peace so long as he could n't.

"He 'd get Miry up and down with him night after night a-makin' her heat flannels and vinegar, and then he 'd jaw and scold so that she was eenymost beat out. He would n't have nobody set up with him, though there was offers made. No: he said Miry was his daughter, and 't was her bisness to take care on him.

"Miry was clear worked down: folks kind o' pitied her. She was a strong gal, but there 's things that wears out the strongest. The worst on 't was, it hung on so. Old Black Hoss had a most amazin' sight o' constitution. He 'd go all down to death's door, and seem hardly to have the breath o' life in him, and then up he 'd come ag'in! These

'ere old folks that nobody wants to have live allers hev such a sight o' wear in 'em, they jest last and last; and it really did seem as if he 'd wear Miry out and get her into the grave fust, for she got a cough with bein' up so much in the cold, and grew thin as a shadder. 'Member one time I went up there to offer to watch jest in the spring o' the year, when the laylocks was jest a-buddin' out, and Miry she come and talked with me over the fence; and the poor gal she fairly broke down, and sobbed as if her heart would break, a-tellin' me her trouble.

"Wal, it reelly affected me more to have Miry give up so than most gals, 'cause she 'd allers held her head up, and hed sich a sight o' grit and resolution; but she told me all about it.

"It seems old Black Hoss he wa'n't content with worryin' on her, and gettin' on her up nights, but he kep' a-hectorin' her about Bill Elderkin, and wantin' on her to promise that she would n't hev Bill when he was dead and gone; and Miry she would n't promise, and then the old man said she should n't have a cent from him if she did n't, and so they had it back and forth. Everybody in town was sayin' what a shame 't was that he should sarve her so; for though he had other children, they was married and gone, and there wa'n't none of them to do for him but jest Miry.

"Wal, he hung on till jest as the pinys in the front yard was beginnin' to blow out, and then he began to feel he was a-goin', and he sent for Parson Lothrop to know what was to be done about his soul.

"'Wal,' says Parson Lothrop, 'you must settle up all your worldly affairs; you must be in peace and love with all mankind; and if you 've wronged anybody, you must make it good to 'em.'

"Old Black Hoss he bounced right over in his bed with his back to the minister.

"'The devil!' says he: 'it will take all I've got.' And he never spoke another word, though Parson Lothrop he prayed with him, and did what he could for him.

"Wal, that night I sot up with him; and he went off 'tween two and three in the mornin', and I laid him out regular. Of all the racks o' bone I ever see, I never see a human critter so poor as he was. 'T wa'n't nothin' but his awful will kep' his soul in his body so long, as it was.

"We had the funeral in the meetin'-house a Sunday; and Parson Lothrop he preached a sarmon on contentment on the text, 'We brought nothin' into the world, and it's sartin we can carry nothin' out; and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' Parson Lothrop he got round the subject about as handsome as he could: he didn't say what a skinflint old Black Hoss was, but he talked in a gineral way about the vanity o' worryin' an' scrapin' to heap up riches. Ye see, Parson Lothrop he could say it all putty easy, too, 'cause since he married a rich wife he never hed no occasion to worry about temporal matters. Folks allers preaches better on the vanity o' riches when they 's in tol'able easy circumstances. Ye see, when folks is pestered and worried to pay their bills, and don't know where the next dollar 's to come from, it 's a great temptation to be kind o' valooin' riches, and mebbe envyin' those that 's got 'em; whereas when one's accounts all pays themselves, and the money comes jest when it 's wanted regular, a body feels sort o' composed like, and able to take the right view o' things, like Parson Lothrop.

"Wal, arter the sermon the relations all went over to the old house to hear the will read; and, as I was kind o' friend with the family, I jest slipped in along with the rest.

"Squire Jones he had the will; and so when they all got sot round all solemn, he broke the seals and unfolded it, cracklin' it a good while afore he begun, and it was so still you might 'a' heard a pin drop when he begun to read.

Fust, there was the farm and stock, he left to his son John Brown over in Sherburne. Then there was the household stuff and all them things, spoons and dishes, and beds and kiver lids, and so on, to his da'ter Polly Blanchard. And then, last of all, he says, he left to his da'ter Miry *the pitcher that was on the top o' the shelf in his bedroom closet.*

"That 'ere was an old cracked pitcher that Miry allers hed hated the sight of, and spring and fall she used to beg her father to let her throw it away; but no, he would n't let her touch it, and so it stood gatherin' dust.

"Some on 'em run and handed it down; and it seemed jest full o' scourin'-sand and nothin' else, and they handed it to Miry.

"Wal, Miry she was wrathy then. She did n't so much mind bein' left out in the will, 'cause she expected that; but to have that 'ere old pitcher poked at her so sort o' scornful was more 'n she could bear.

"She took it and gin it a throw across the room with all her might; and it hit agin the wall and broke into a thousand bits, when out rolled hundreds of gold pieces; great gold eagles and guineas flew round the kitchen jest as thick as dandelions in a meadow. I tell you, she scrabbled them up pretty quick, and we all helped her.

"Come to count 'em over, Miry had the best fortin of the whole, as 't was right and proper she should. Miry she was a sensible gal, and she invested her money well; and so, when Bill Elderkin got through his law-studies, he found a wife that could make a nice beginnin' with him. And that 's the way, you see, they came to be doin' as well as they be.

"So, boys, you jest mind and remember and allers see what there is in a providence afore you quarrel with it, 'cause there 's a good many things in this world turns out like Mis' Elderkin's pitcher."

VII

THE GHOST IN THE CAP'N BROWN HOUSE

"Now, Sam, tell us certain true, are there any such things as ghosts?"

"Be there ghosts?" said Sam, immediately translating into his vernacular grammar. "Wal, now, that 'ere 's jest the question, ye see."

"Well, grandma thinks there are, and Aunt Lois thinks it 's all nonsense. Why, Aunt Lois don't even believe the stories in Cotton Mather's 'Magnalia.'"

"Wanter know?" said Sam, with a tone of slow, languid meditation.

We were sitting on the bank of the Charles River, fishing. The soft melancholy red of evening was fading off in streaks on the glassy water, and the houses of Oldtown were beginning to loom through the gloom, solemn and ghostly. There are times and tones and moods of nature that make all the vulgar, daily real seem shadowy, vague, and supernatural, as if the outlines of this hard material present were fading into the invisible and unknown. So Oldtown, with its elm-trees, its great square white houses, its meeting-house and tavern and blacksmith's shop and mill, which at high noon seem as real and as commonplace as possible, at this hour of the evening were dreamy and solemn. They rose up blurred, indistinct, dark; here and there winking candles sent long lines of light through the shadows, and little drops of unforeseen rain rippled the sheeny darkness of the water.

"Wal, you see, boys, in them things it 's jest as well

to mind your granny. There 's a consid'able sight o' gumption in grandmas. You look at the folks that 's allus tellin' you what they don't believe, — they don't believe this, and they don't believe that, — and what sort o' folks is they? Why, like yer Aunt Lois, sort o' stringy and dry. There ain't no 'sorption got out o' not believin' nothin'.

"Lord a massy! we don't know nothin' 'bout them things. We hain't been there, and can't say that there ain't no ghosts and sich; can we, now?"

We agreed to that fact, and sat a little closer to Sam in the gathering gloom.

"Tell us about the Cap'n Brown house, Sam."

"Ye did n't never go over the Cap'n Brown house?"

No, we had not that advantage.

"Wal, yer see, Cap'n Brown he made all his money to sea, in furrin parts, and then come here to Oldtown to settle down.

"Now, there ain't no knowin' 'bout these 'ere old shipmasters, where they 's ben, or what they 's ben a-doin', or how they got their money. Ask me no questions, and I 'll tell ye no lies, is 'bout the best philosophy for them. Wal, it did n't do no good to ask Cap'n Brown questions too close, 'cause you did n't git no satisfaction. Nobody rightly knew 'bout who his folks was, or where they come from, and, ef a body asked him, he used to say that the very fust he knowed 'bout himself he was a young man walkin' the streets in London.

"But, yer see, boys, he hed money, and that is about all folks wanter know when a man comes to settle down. And he bought that 'ere place, and built that 'ere house. He built it all sea-cap'n fashion, so 's to feel as much at home as he could. The parlor was like a ship's cabin. The table and chairs was fastened down to the floor, and the closets was made with holes to set the casters and the decanters and bottles in, jest 's they be at sea; and there

was stanchions to hold on by; and they say that blowy nights the cap'n used to fire up pretty well with his grog, till he hed about all he could carry, and then he 'd set and hold on, and hear the wind blow, and kind o' feel out to sea right there to hum. There was n't no Mis' Cap'n Brown, and there did n't seem likely to be none. And whether there ever hed been one, nobody knowed. He hed an old black Guinea nigger-woman, named Quassia, that did his work. She was shaped pretty much like one o' these 'ere great crookneck squashes. She wa'n't no gret beauty, I can tell you; and she used to wear a gret red turban and a yaller short gown and red petticoat, and a gret string o' gold beads round her neck, and gret big gold hoops in her ears, made right in the middle o' Africa among the heathen there. For all she was black, she thought a heap o' herself, and was consid'able sort o' predominative over the cap'n. Lordy massy! boys, it 's allus so. Get a man and a woman together, — any sort o' woman you 're a mind to, don't care who 't is, — and one way or another she gets the rule over him, and he jest has to train to her fife. Some does it one way, and some does it another; some does it by jawin', and some does it by kissin', and some does it by faculty and contrivance; but one way or another they allers does it. Old Cap'n Brown was a good stout, stocky kind o' John Bull sort o' fellow, and a good judge o' sperits, and allers kep' the best in them 'ere cupboards o' his'n; but, fust and last, things in his house went pretty much as old Quassia said.

"Folks got to kind o' respectin' Quassia. She come to meetin' Sunday regular, and sot all fixed up in red and yaller and green, with glass beads and what not, lookin' for all the world like one o' them ugly Indian idols; but she was well behaved as any Christian. She was a master hand at cookin'. Her bread and biscuits could n't be beat, and no could n't her pies, and there wa'n't no such pound-

cake as she made nowhere. Wal, this 'ere story I 'm a-goin' to tell you was told me by Cinthy Pendleton. There ain't a more respectable gal, old or young, than Cinthy nowheres. She lives over to Sherburne now, and I hear tell she 's sot up a manty-makin' business ; but then she used to do tailorin' in Oldtown. She was a member o' the church, and a good Christian as ever was. Wal, ye see, Quassia she got Cinthy to come up and spend a week to the Cap'n Brown house, a-doin' tailorin' and a-fixin' over his close : 't was along toward the fust o' March. Cinthy she sot by the fire in the front parlor with her goose and her press-board and her work : for there wa'n't no company callin', and the snow was drifted four feet deep right across the front door : so there wa'n't much danger o' anybody comin' in. And the cap'n he was a perlite man to wimmen ; and Cinthy she liked it jest as well not to have company, 'cause the cap'n he 'd make himself entertainin' tellin' on her sea-stories, and all about his adventures among the Ammonites, and Perresites, and Jebusites, and all sorts o' heathen people he 'd been among.

" Wal, that 'ere week there come on the master snowstorm. Of all the snowstorms that hed ben, that 'ere was the beater ; and I tell you the wind blew as if 't was the last chance it was ever goin' to hev. Wal, it 's kind o' scary like to be shet up in a lone house with all natur' a kind o' breakin' out, and goin' on so, and the snow a-comin' down so thick ye can't see 'cross the street, and the wind a-pipin' and a-squealin' and a-rumblin' and a-tumblin' fust down this chimney and then down that. I tell you, it sort o' sets a feller thinkin' o' the three great things, — death, judgment, and etarnaty ; and I don't care who the folks is, nor how good they be, there 's times when they must be feelin' putty consid'able solemn.

" Wal, Cinthy she said she kind o' felt so along, and she hed a sort o' queer feelin' come over her as if there

was somebody or somethin' round the house more 'n appeared. She said she sort o' felt it in the air; but it seemed to her silly, and she tried to get over it. But two or three times, she said, when it got to be dusk, she felt somebody go by her up the stairs. The front entry wa'n't very light in the daytime, and in the storm, come five o'clock, it was so dark that all you could see was jest a gleam o' somethin', and two or three times when she started to go upstairs she see a soft white suthin' that seemed goin' up before her, and she stopped with her heart a-beatin' like a trip-hammer, and she sort o' saw it go up and along the entry to the cap'n's door, and then it seemed to go right through, 'cause the door did n't open.

"Wal, Cinthy says she to old Quassia, says she, 'Is there anybody lives in this house but us?'

"'Anybody lives here?' says Quassia: 'what you mean?' says she.

"Says Cinthy, 'I thought somebody went past me on the stairs last night and to-night.'

"Lordy massy! how old Quassia did screech and laugh. 'Good Lord!' says she, 'how foolish white folks is! Somebody went past you? Was 't the capt'in?'

"'No, it wa'n't the cap'n,' says she: 'it was somethin' soft and white, and moved very still; it was like somethin' in the air,' says she.

"Then Quassia she haw-hawed louder. Says she, 'It 's hy-sterikes, Miss Cinthy; that 's all it is.'

"Wal, Cinthy she was kind o' 'shamed, but for all that she could n't help herself. Sometimes evenin's she 'd be a-settin' with the cap'n, and she 'd think she 'd hear somebody a-movin' in his room overhead; and she knowed it wa'n't Quassia, 'cause Quassia was ironin' in the kitchen. She took pains once or twice to find out that 'ere.

"Wal, ye see, the cap'n's room was the gret front upper chamber over the parlor, and then right oppisite to it was

the gret spare chamber where Cinthy slept. It was jest as grand as could be, with a gret four-post mahogany bedstead and damask curtains brought over from England; but it was cold enough to freeze a white bear solid, — the way spare chambers allers is. Then there was the entry between, run straight through the house: one side was old Quassia's room, and the other was a sort o' store-room, where the old cap'n kep' all sorts o' traps.

"Wal, Cinthy she kep' a-hevin' things happen and a-seein' things, till she did n't railly know what was in it. Once when she come into the parlor jest at sundown, she was sure she see a white figure a-vanishin' out o' the door that went towards the side entry. She said it was so dusk, that all she could see was jest this white figure, and it jest went out still as a cat as she come in.

"Wal, Cinthy did n't like to speak to the cap'n about it. She was a close woman, putty prudent, Cinthy was.

"But one night, 'bout the middle o' the week, this 'ere thing kind o' come to a crisis.

"Cinthy said she'd ben up putty late a-sewin' and a-finishin' off down in the parlor; and the cap'n he sot up with her, and was consid'able cheerful and entertainin', tellin' her all about things over in the Bermudys, and off to Chiny and Japan, and round the world ginerally. The storm that hed been a-blowin' all the week was about as furious as ever; and the cap'n he stirred up a mess o' flip, and hed it for her hot to go to bed on. He was a good-natured critter, and allers had feelin's for lone women: and I s'pose he knew 't was sort o' desolate for Cinthy.

"Wal, takin' the flip so right the last thing afore goin' to bed, she went right off to sleep as sound as a nut, and slep' on till somewhere about mornin', when she said somethin' waked her broad awake in a minute. Her eyes flew wide open like a spring, and the storm hed gone down and the moon come out; and there, standin' right in the moon-

light by her bed, was a woman jest as white as a sheet, with black hair hangin' down to her waist, and the brightest, mournfullest black eyes you ever see. She stood there lookin' right at Cinthy; and Cinthy thinks that was what waked her up; 'cause, you know, ef anybody stands and looks steady at folks asleep it 's apt to wake 'em.

"Any way, Cinthy said she felt jest as ef she was turnin' to stone. She could n't move nor speak. She lay a minute, and then she shut her eyes, and begun to say her prayers; and a minute after she opened 'em, and it was gone.

"Cinthy was a sensible gal, and one that allers hed her thoughts about her; and she jest got up and put a shawl round her shoulders, and went first and looked at the doors, and they was both on 'em locked jest as she left 'em when she went to bed. Then she looked under the bed and in the closet, and felt all round the room: where she could n't see she felt her way, and there wa'n't nothin' there.

"Wal, next mornin' Cinthy got up and went home, and she kep' it to herself a good while. Finally, one day when she was workin' to our house she told Hepsy about it, and Hepsy she told me."

"Well, Sam," we said, after a pause, in which we heard only the rustle of leaves and the ticking of branches against each other, "what do you suppose it was?"

"Wal, there 't is: you know jest as much about it as I do. Hepsy told Cinthy it might 'a' ben a dream; so it might, but Cinthy she was sure it wa'n't a dream, 'cause she remembers plain hearin' the old clock on the stairs strike four while she had her eyes open lookin' at the woman; and then she only shet 'em a minute, jest to say 'Now I lay me,' and opened 'em and she was gone.

"Wal, Cinthy told Hepsy, and Hepsy she kep' it putty close. She did n't tell it to nobody except Aunt Sally Dickerson and the Widder Bije Smith and your Grandma

Badger and the minister's wife, and they every one o' 'em 'greed it ought to be kep' close, 'cause it would make talk. Wal, come spring somehow or other it seemed to 'a' got all over Oldtown. I heard on 't to the store and up to the tavern; and Jake Marshall he says to me one day, 'What 's this 'ere about the cap'n's house?' And the Widder Loker she says to me, 'There 's ben a ghost seen in the cap'n's house;' and I heard on 't clear over to Needham and Sherburne.

"Some o' the women they drew themselves up putty stiff and proper. Your Aunt Lois was one on 'em.

"'Ghost,' says she; 'don't tell me! Perhaps it would be best ef 't was a ghost,' says she. She did n't think there ought to be no sich doin's in nobody's house; and your grandma she shet her up, and told her she did n't oughter talk so."

"Talk how?" said I, interrupting Sam with wonder. "What did Aunt Lois mean?"

"Why, you see," said Sam mysteriously, "there allers is folks in every town that 's just like the Sadducees in old times: they won't believe in angel nor sperit, no way you can fix it; and ef things is seen and done in a house, why, they say, it 's 'cause there 's somebody there; there 's some sort o' deviltry or trick about it.

"So the story got round that there was a woman kep' private in Cap'n Brown's house, and that he brought her from furrin parts; and it growed and growed, till there was all sorts o' ways o' tellin' on 't.

"Some said they 'd seen her a-settin' at an open winder. Some said that moonlight nights they 'd seen her a-walkin' out in the back garden kind o' in and out 'mong the bean-poles and squash-vines.

"You see, it come on spring and summer; and the winders o' the Cap'n Brown house stood open, and folks was all a-watchin' on 'em day and night. Aunt Sally

Dickerson told the minister's wife that she 'd seen in plain daylight a woman a-settin' at the chamber winder atween four and five o'clock in the mornin', — jist a-settin' a-lookin' out and a-doin' nothin', like anybody else. She was very white and pale, and had black eyes.

"Some said that it was a nun the cap'n had brought away from a Roman Catholic convent in Spain, and some said he 'd got her out o' the Inquisition.

"Aunt Sally said she thought the minister ought to call and inquire why she did n't come to meetin', and who she was, and all about her: 'cause, you see, she said it might be all right enough ef folks only knowed jest how things was; but ef they did n't, why, folks will talk."

"Well, did the minister do it?"

"What, Parson Lothrop? Wal, no, he did n't. He made a call on the cap'n in a regular way, and asked arter his health and all his family. But the cap'n he seemed jest as jolly and chipper as a spring robin, and he gin the minister some o' his old Jamaiky; and the minister he come away and said he did n't see nothin'; and no he did n't. Folks never does see nothin' when they ain't lookin' where 't is. Fact is, Parson Lothrop wa'n't fond o' interferin'; he was a master hand to slick things over. Your grandma she used to mourn about it, 'cause she said he never gin no p'int to the doctrines; but 't was all of a piece, he kind o' took everything the smooth way.

"But your grandma she believed in the ghost, and so did Lady Lothrop. I was up to her house t'other day fixin' a door-knob, and says she, 'Sam your wife told me a strange story about the Cap'n Brown house.'

"'Yes, ma'am, she did,' says I.

"'Well, what do you think of it?' says she.

"'Wal, sometimes I think, and then ag'in I don't know,' says I. 'There 's Cinthy she 's a member o' the church and a good pious gal,' says I.

"'Yes, Sam,' says Lady Lothrop, says she; 'and Sam,' says she, 'it is jest like something that happened once to my grandmother when she was livin' in the old Province House in Bostin.' Says she, 'These 'ere things is the mysteries of Providence, and it 's jest as well not to have 'em too much talked about.'

"'Jest so,' says I, — 'jest so. That 'ere 's what every woman I 've talked with says; and I guess, fust and last, I 've talked with twenty, — good, safe church members, — and they 's every one o' opinion that this 'ere ought n't to be talked about. Why, over to the deakin's t'other night we went it all over as much as two or three hours, and we concluded that the best way was to keep quite still about it; and that 's jest what they say over to Needham and Sherburne. I 've been all round a-hushin' this 'ere up, and I hain't found but a few people that hed n't the particulars one way or another.' This 'ere was what I says to Lady Lothrop. The fact was, I never did see no report spread so, nor make sich sort o' sarchin's o' heart, as this 'ere. It really did beat all; 'cause, ef 't was a ghost, why there was the p'int proved, ye see. Cinthy 's a church member, and she see it, and got right up and sarched the room: but then ag'in, ef 't was a woman, why that 'ere was kind o' awful; it give cause, ye see, for thinkin' all sorts o' things. There was Cap'n Brown, to be sure, he wa'n't a church member; but yet he was as honest and regular a man as any goin', as fur as any on us could see. To be sure, nobody knowed where he come from, but that wa'n't no reason agin him: this 'ere might a ben a crazy sister, or some poor critter that he took out o' the best o' motives; and the Scriptur' says, 'Charity hopeth all things.' But then, ye see, folks will talk, — that 'ere 's the pester o' all these things, — and they did some on 'em talk consid'able strong about the cap'n; but somehow or other, there did n't nobody come to the p'int o' facin' on him down, and sayin'

square out, 'Cap'n Brown, have you got a woman in your house, or hain't you? or is it a ghost, or what is it?' Folks somehow never does come to that. Ye see, there was the cap'n so respectable, a-settin' up every Sunday there in his pew, with his ruffles round his hands and his red broadcloth cloak and his cocked hat. Why, folks' hearts sort o' failed 'em when it come to sayin' anything right to him. They thought and kind o' whispered round that the minister or the deakins oughter do it: but Lordy massy! ministers, I s'pose, has feelin's like the rest on us; they don't want to eat all the hard cheeses that nobody else won't eat. Anyhow, there was n't nothin' said direct to the cap'n; and jest for want o' that all the folks in Oldtown kep' a-bilin' and a-bilin' like a kettle o' soap, till it seemed all the time as if they 'd bile over.

"Some o' the wimmen tried to get somethin' out o' Quassy. Lordy massy! you might as well 'a' tried to get it out an old tom-turkey, that 'll strut and gobble and quitter, and drag his wings on the ground, and fly at you, but won't say nothin'. Quassy she screeched her queer sort o' laugh; and she told 'em that they was a-makin' fools o' themselves, and that the cap'n's matters wa'n't none o' their bisness; and that was true enough. As to goin' into Quassia's room, or into any o' the store-rooms or closets she kep' the keys of, you might as well hev gone into a lion's den. She kep' all her places locked up tight; and there was no gettin' at nothin' in the Cap'n Brown house, else I believe some o' the wimmen would 'a' sent a sarch-warrant."

"Well," said I, "what came of it? Did n't anybody ever find out?"

"Wal," said Sam, "it come to an end sort o', and did n't come to an end. It was jest this 'ere way. You see, along in October, jest in the cider-makin' time, Abel Flint he was took down with dysentery and died. You 'member the Flint house: it stood on a little rise o' ground jest lookin'

over towards the Brown house. Wal, there was Aunt Sally Dickerson and the Widder Bije Smith, they set up with the corpse. He was laid out in the back chamber, you see, over the milk-room and kitchen; but there was cold victuals and sich in the front chamber, where the watchers sot. Wal, now, Aunt Sally she told me that between three and four o'clock she heard wheels a-rumblin', and she went to the winder, and it was clear starlight; and she see a coach come up to the Cap'n Brown house; and she see the cap'n come out bringin' a woman all wrapped in a cloak, and old Quassy came after with her arms full o' bundles; and he put her into the kerridge, and shet her in, and it driv off; and she see old Quassy stand lookin' over the fence arter it. She tried to wake up the widder, but 't was towards mornin', and the widder allers was a hard sleeper; so there wa'n't no witness but her."

"Well, then, it was n't a ghost," said I, "after all, and it was a woman."

"Wal, there 't is, you see. Folks don't know that 'ere yit, 'cause there it 's jest as broad as 't is long. Now, look at it. There 's Cinthy, she 's a good, pious gal: she locks her chamber-doors, both on 'em, and goes to bed, and wakes up in the night, and there 's a woman there. She jest shets her eyes, and the woman 's gone. She gits up and looks and both doors is locked jest as she left 'em. That 'ere woman wa'n't flesh and blood now, no way, — not such flesh and blood as we knows on; but then they say Cinthy might hev dreamed it!

"Wal, now, look at it t'other way. There 's Aunt Sally Dickerson; she 's a good woman and a church member: wal, she sees a woman in a cloak with all her bundles brought out o' Cap'n Brown's house, and put into a kerridge, and driv off, atween three and four o'clock in the mornin'. Wal, that 'ere shows there must 'a' ben a real live woman kep' there privately, and so what Cinthy saw was n't a ghost.

"Wal, now, Cinthy says Aunt Sally might 'a' dreamed it, — that she got her head so full o' stories about the Cap'n Brown house, and watched it till she got asleep, and hed this 'ere dream; and, as there did n't nobody else see it, it might 'a' ben, you know. Aunt Sally 's clear she did n't dream, and then ag'in Cinthy 's clear she did n't dream; but which on 'em was awake, or which on 'em was asleep, is what ain't settled in Oldtown yet."

VIII

COLONEL EPH'S SHOE-BUCKLES

"YES, this 'ere 's Tekawampait's grave," said Sam Lawson, sitting leisurely down on an ancient grass-grown mound, ornamented by a mossy black slate-stone slab, with a rudely carved cherub head and wings on top.

"And who was Tekawampait?"

"I wanter know, now, if your granny hain't told you who Tekawampait was?" said Sam, pushing back his torn straw hat, and leaning against the old slanting grave-stone.

"No, she never told us."

"Wal, ye see, Tekawampait he was the fust Christian Indian minister o' the gospel there was in Oldtown. He was a full-blooded Indian, but he was as good a Christian as there was goin'; and he was settled here over the church in Oldtown afore Parson Peabody; and Parson Peabody he come afore Parson Lothrop; and a very good minister Tekawampait was too. Folks hes said that there could n't nothin' be made o' Indians; that they was nothin' but sort o' bears and tigers a-walkin' round on their hind legs, a-seekin' whom they might devour; but Parson Eliot he did n't think so. 'Christ died for them as wal as for me,' says he; 'and jest give 'em the gospel,' says he, 'and the rest 'll come along o' itself.' And so he come here to Oldtown, and sot up a sort o' log-hut right on the spot where the old Cap'n Brown house is now. Them two great elm-trees that 's a grown now each side o' the front gate was two little switches then, that two Indians

brought up over their shoulders, and planted there for friendship trees, as they called 'em; and now look what trees they be! He used to stand under that 'ere big oak there, and preach to the Indians, long before there was any meetin'-house to speak in here in Oldtown.

"Wal, now, I tell you, it took putty good courage in Parson Eliot to do that 'ere. I tell you, in them days it took putty consid'able faith to see anything in an Indian but jest a wild beast. Folks can't tell by seein' on 'em now days what they was in the old times when all the settlements was new, and the Indians was stark, starin' wild, a-ravin' and tarin' round in the woods, and a-fightin' each other and a-fightin' the white folks. Lordy massy! the stories I 've heard women tell in their chimbley-corners about the things that used to happen when they was little was enough to scare the very life out o' ye."

"Oh, do, do tell us some of them!" said Harry and I.

"Lordy massy, boys! why, ye would n't sleep for a week. Why, ye don't know. Why, the Indians in them days wa'n't like no critter ye ever did see. They was jest the horridest, paintedest, screechin'est, cussedest critters you ever heard on, they was jest as artful as sarpents, and crueller than any tigers. Good Dr. Cotton Mather calls 'em divils, and he was a meek, good man, Dr. Cotton was; but they cut up so in his days, it 's no wonder he thought they was divils, and not folks. Why, they kep' the whole country in a broil for years and years. Nobody knowed when they was safe; for they were so sly and cunnin', and always watchin' behind fences and bushes, and ready when a body was a least thinkin' on 't to be down on 'em. I 've heard Abiel Jones tell how his father's house was burnt down at the time the Indians burnt Deerfield. About every house in the settlement was burnt to the ground; and then another time they burnt thirty-two houses in Springfield, — the minister's house and all, with all his

library (and books was sca'ce in them days); but the Indians made a clean sweep on 't. They burnt all the houses in Wendham down to the ground; and they came down in Lancaster, and burnt ever so many houses, and carried off forty or fifty people with 'em into the woods.

"There was Mr. Rolandson, the minister, they burnt his house, and carried off Mis' Rolandson and all the children. There was Jerushy Pierce used to work in his family and do washin' and chores, she 's told me about it. Jerushy she was away to her uncle's that night, so she wa'n't took. Ye see, the Lancaster folks had been afeard the Indians 'd be down on 'em, and so Parson Rolandson he 'd gone on to Boston to get help for 'em; and when he come back the mischief was all done. Jerushy said in all her life she never see nothin' so pitiful as that 'ere poor man's face when she met him, jest as he come to the place where the house stood. At fust he did n't say a word, she said, but he looked kind o' dazed. Then he sort o' put his hand to his forehead, and says he, 'My God, my God, help me!' Then he tried to ask her about it, but he could n't but jest speak. 'Jerushy,' says he, 'can't you tell me, — where be they?' 'Wal,' says Jerushy, 'they 've been carried off.' And with that he fell right down and moaned and groaned. 'Oh!' says he, 'I 'd rather heard that they were at peace with the Lord.' And then he 'd wring his hands: 'What shall I do? What shall I do?'

"Wal, 't wa'n't long after this that the Indians was down on Medford, and burnt half the houses in town, and killed fifty or sixty people there. Then they came down on Northampton, but got driv back; but then they burnt up five houses, and killed four or five of the folks afore they got the better of 'em there. Then they burnt all the houses in Groton, meetin'-house and all; and the pisen critters they hollared and triumphed over the people, and called out to 'em, 'What will you do for a house to pray

in now? we 've burnt your meetin'-house.' The fightin' was goin' on all over the country at the same time. The Indians set Marlborough afire, and it was all blazin' at once the same day that some others of 'em was down on Springfield, and the same day Cap'n Pierce, with forty-nine white men and twenty-six Christian Indians, got drawn into an ambush, and every one of 'em killed. Then a few days after this they burnt forty houses at Rehoboth, and a little while after they burnt thirty more at Providence. And then when good Cap'n Wadsworth went with seventy men to help the men in Sudbury, the Indians came pourin' round 'em in the woods like so many wolves, and killed all but four or five on 'em; and those poor fellows had better hev been killed, for the cruel critters jest tormented 'em to death, and mocked and jeered at their screeches and screams like so many divils. Then they went and broke loose on Andover; and they was so cruel they could n't even let the dumb critters alone. They cut out the tongues of oxen and cows, and left 'em bleedin', and some they fastened up in barns and burnt alive. There wa'n't no sort o' diviltry they wa'n't up to. Why, it got to be so in them days that folks could n't go to bed in peace without startin' every time they turned over for fear o' the Indians. Ef they heard a noise in the night, or ef the wind squealed and howled, as the wind will, they 'd think sure enough there was that horrid yell a-comin' down chimbley.

"There was Delily Severence; she says to me, speakin' about them times, says she, 'Why, Mr. Lawson, you 've no idee! Why, that 'ere screech,' says she, 'wa'n't like no other noise in heaven above, or earth beneath, or water under the earth,' says she. 'When it started ye out o' bed between two or three o'clock in the mornin', and all your children a-cryin', and the Indians a-screechin' and yellin' and a-tossin' up fire-brands, fust at one window and then at another, why,' says she, 'Mr. Lawson, it was more like hell upon earth than anything I ever heard on.'

"Ye see, they come down on Delily's house when she was but jest up arter her third baby. That 'ere woman hed a handsome head o' hair as ever ye see, black as a crow's wing; and it turned jest as white as a table-cloth, with nothin' but the fright o' that night."

"What did they do with her?"

"Oh! they took her and her poor little gal and boy, that wa'n't no older than you be, and went off with 'em to Canada. The troubles them poor critters went through! Her husband he was away that night; and well he was, else they 'd 'a' tied him to a tree and stuck pine slivers into him and sot 'em afire, and cut gret pieces out o' his flesh, and filled the places with hot coals and ashes, and all sich kind o' things they did to them men prisoners, when they catched 'em. Delily was thankful enough he was away; but they took her and the children off through the ice and snow, jest half clothed and shiverin'; and when her baby cried and worried, as it nat'rally would, the old Indian jest took it by its heels, and dashed its brains out agin a tree, and threw it into the crotch of a tree, and left it dangling there; and then they would mock and laugh at her, and mimic her baby's crying, and try every way they could to aggravate her. They used to beat and torment her children right before her eyes, and pull their hair out, and make believe that they was goin' to burn 'em alive, jest for nothin' but to frighten and worry her."

"I wonder," said I, "she ever got back alive."

"Wal, the wimmen in them times hed a sight o' wear in 'em. They was resolute, strong, hard-workin' wimmen. They could all tackle a hoss, or load and fire a gun. They was brought up hard, and they was used to troubles and dangers. It 's jest as folks gets used to things how they takes 'em. In them days folks was brought up to 'spect trouble; they did n't look for no less. Why, in them days the men allers took their guns into the field when they

went to hoe corn, and took their guns with 'em to meetin' Sundays; and the wimmen they kep' a gun loaded where they knew where to find it; and when trouble come it was jest what they 'spected, and they was put even with it. That 's the sort o' wimmen they was. Wal, Delily and her children was brought safe through at last, but they hed a hard time on 't."

"Tell us some more stories about Indians, Sam," we said, with the usual hungry impatience of boys for a story.

"Wal, let me see," said Sam, with his hat pushed back and his eyes fixed dreamily on the top of Eliot's oak, which was now yellow with the sunset glory, — "let me see. I hain't never told ye about Colonel Eph Miller, hev I?"

"No, indeed. What about him?"

"Wal, he was took prisoner by the Indians; and they was goin' to roast him alive arter their fashion, and he gin 'em the slip."

"Do tell us all about it."

"Wal, you see, Deliverance Scranton over to Sherburne, she 's Colonel Eph's daughter; and she used to hear her father tell about that, and she 's told me time and ag'in about it. It was this way, —

"You see, there hed n't ben no alarm about Indians for some time, and folks hed got to feelin' kind o' easy, as folks will. When there don't nothin' happen for a good while, and it keeps a-goin' on so, why, you think finally there won't nothin' happen; and so it was with Colonel Eph and his wife. She told Deliverance that the day before she reelly hed forgot all about that there was any Indians in the country, and she 'd been out after spruce and wintergreen and hemlock, and got over her brass kettle to bile for beer; and the child'n they brought in lots o' wild grapes that they gathered out in the woods; and they said when they came home that they thought they see an Indian a-lyin' all along squirmin' through the bushes, and peekin' out at

'em like a snake, but they wa'n't quite sure. Faith, the oldest gal, she was sure she see him quite plain; but 'Bijah (he was Colonel Eph's oldest boy) he wa'n't so sure.

"Any way, they did n't think no more about it, and that night they hed prayers and went off to bed.

"Arterwards, Colonel Eph he said he remembered the passage o' Scriptur' he read that night; it was, 'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' He did n't notice it much when he read it; but he allers spoke of it arterwards as a remarkable providence that that 'ere passage should have come jest so that night.

"Wal, atween twelve and one o'clock they was waked up by the most awful screechin' that ever you heard, as if twenty thousand devils was upon 'em. Mis' Miller she was out o' bed in a minit, all standin'. 'O husband, husband, the Indians are on us!' says she; and sure enough they was. The children, 'Bijah and Faith, come a-runnin' in. 'O father, father! what shall we do?'

"Colonel Eph was a man that allers knew in a minit what to do, and he kep' quite cool. 'My dear,' says he to his wife, 'you take the children, and jest run with 'em right out the buttery door through the high corn, and run as fast as you can over to your father Stebbins', and tell him to rouse the town; and Bije,' says he to the boy, 'you jest get into the belfry window, and ring the bell with all your might,' says he. 'And I 'll stay and fight 'em off till the folks come.'

"All this while the Indians was a-yellin' and screechin' and a-wavin' fire-brands front of the house. Colonel Eph he stood a-lookin' through a hole in the shutter and a-sightin' his gun while he was a-talkin'. He see that they 'd been a-pilin' up a great pile o' dry wood agin the door. But the fust Indian that came up to put fire to 't was shot right down while he was a-speakin'.

"Wal, Mis' Miller and Faith and Bije wa'n't long

a-dressin', you may believe; and they jest put on dark cloaks, and they jest streaked it out through the buttery door! There was thick pole-beans quite up to the buttery door, and then a field o' high corn, so that they was hid, and the way they run was n't slow, I tell you.

"But Colonel Eph he hed to stop so to load that they got the pile o' brush afire, though he shot down three or four on 'em, and that was some comfort. But the long and short o' the matter was, that they driv the door in at last, and came a-whoopin' and yellin' into the house.

"Wal, they took Colonel Eph, and then went searchin' round to find somebody else; but jest then the meetin'-house bell begun to ring, and that scart 'em, and they took Colonel Eph and made off with him. He hed n't but jest time to get into his clothes and get his shoes on, when they hurried him off. They did n't do nothin' to him jest then, you see, these Indians was so cur'ous. If a man made a good fight, and killed three or four on 'em afore they could take him, they sot great store by him, and called him a brave man. And so they was 'mazin' careful of Colonel Eph, and treated him quite polite for Indians; but he knew the ways on 'em well enough to know what it was all for. They wanted a real brave man to burn alive and stick slivers into and torment, and Colonel Eph was jest the pattern for 'em, and his fightin' so brave made him all the better for what they wanted.

"Wal, he was in hopes the town would be roused in time for some of 'em to come arter him; but the Indians got the start of 'em, and got 'way off in the woods afore people hed fairly come together and found out what the matter was. There was Colonel Eph's house a-blazin' and a-lightin' up all the country for miles round; and the colonel he said it come ruther hard on him to be lighted on his way through the woods by such a bonfire.

"Wal, by mornin' they come to one o' their camps, and

there they hed a great rejoicin' over him. They was going to hev a great feast, and a good time a-burnin' on him; and they tied him to a tree, and sot an Indian to watch him while they went out to cut pine knots and slivers to do him with.

"Wal, as I said, Colonel Eph was a brave man, and a man that always kep' his thoughts about him; and so he kep' a-workin' and a-workin' with the withes that was round his hands, and a-prayin' in his heart to the Lord, till he got his right hand free. Wal, he did n't make no move, but kep' a-loosenin' and a-loosenin' little by little, keepin' his eye on the Indian who sot there on the ground by him.

"Now, Colonel Eph hed slipped his feet into his Sunday shoes that stood there by the bed and hed great silver shoe-buckles; and there was a providence in his doin' so, for, ye see, Indians are 'mazin' fond o' shiny things. And the old Indian he was took with the shine o' these shoe-buckles, and he thought he might as well hev 'em as anybody; so he jest laid down his tommyhawk, and got down on his knees, and was workin' away as earnest as could be to get off the buckles, and Colonel Eph he jest made a dart forward and picked up the tommyhawk, and split open the Indian's skull with one blow: then he cut the withes that was round his legs, and in a minute he was off on the run with the tommyhawk in his hand. There was three Indians give chase to him, but Colonel Eph he kep' ahead of 'em. He said while he was a-runnin' he was cryin', and callin' on the Lord with all his might, and the words come into his mind he read at prayers the night afore, 'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.'

"At last he see the Indians gained on him; and he faced round suddenly, and struck the nighest one smack on the head with his tommyhawk. Then when the next one come up he cut him down too; and the third one, when he see both the others cut down, and Colonel Eph comin' full

blaze towards him with his tommyhawk a-swingin', he jest turned and run for dear life. Then Colonel Eph he turned and cut for the settlement. He run, and he run, and he run, he did n't well know how long, till, finally, he was clear tuckered out, and he jest dropped down under a tree and slept; and he lay there all the rest of that day, and all night, and never woke till the next day about sundown.

"Then he woke up, and found he was close by home, and John Stebbins his wife's father, and a whole party, was out lookin' for him.

"Old Colonel Eph used to tell the story as long as he lived, and the tears used to run down his cheeks when he told it.

"'There 's a providence in everything,' he used to say, 'even down to shoe-buckles. Ef my Sunday shoes had n't happened to 'a' set there so I could 'a' slipped into 'em, I could n't 'a' killed that Indian, and I should n't 'a' been here to-day.' Wal, boys, he was in the right on 't. Some seem to think the Lord don't look out only for gret things, but, ye see, little things is kind o' hinges that gret ones turns on. They say, take care o' pennies, and dollars 'll take care o' themselves. It 's jest so in everything; and, ef the Lord don't look arter little things, he ain't so gret as they say, any way.

"Wal, wal," said Sam in conclusion, "now, who 'd 'a' thought that anybody could 'a' made anything out o' Indians? Yet there 't was. All them Martha Vineyard Indians turned Christians, and there was Indian preachers and Indian teachers; and they reelly did settle down, and get to be quite like folks. But I tell you, boys, it took faith to start with."

IX

THE BULL-FIGHT

It was Saturday afternoon, — time of blessed memory to boys, — and we were free for a ramble after huckleberries; and, with our pails in hand, were making the best of our way to a noted spot where that fruit was most abundant.

Sam was with us, his long legs striding over the ground at a rate that kept us on a brisk trot, though he himself was only lounging leisurely, with his usual air of contemplation.

"Look 'ere, boys," he suddenly said, pausing and resting his elbow on the top of a rail-fence, "we shall jest hev to go back and go round by Deakin Blodgett's barn."

"Why so?" we both burst forth in eager tones.

"Wal, don't ye see the deakin 's turned in his bull into this 'ere lot?"

"Who cares?" said I. "I ain't afraid."

"Nor I," said Harry. "Look at him: he looks mild enough; he won't hurt us."

"Not as you knows on," said Sam; "and then, ag'in, you don't know, — nobody never knows what one o' them 'ere critters will do: they 's jest the most contrary critters; and ef you think they 're goin' to do one way they 're sure to do t'other. I could tell ye a story now that 'd jest make yer har stan' on eend."

Of course we wanted to have our hair stand on end, and beset Sam for the story; but he hung off.

"Lordy massy! boys, jest let 's wait till ye 've got yer huckleberries: yer granny won't like it ef ye don't bring

her none, and Hepsy she 'll be in my har, — what 's left on 't," said Sam, taking off his old torn hat, and rubbing the loose shock of brash and grizzled hair.

So we turned and made a detour, leaving the bull on the right, though we longed amazingly to have a bout with him, for the fun of the thing, and mentally resolved to try it when our mentor was not round.

It all comes back to me again, — the image of that huckleberry pasture, interwoven with fragrance of sweet-fern, and the ground under our feet embroidered with star-moss and wintergreen, or foamy patches of mossy frost-work, that crushed and crackled delightfully beneath our feet. Every now and then a tall, straight fire-lily — black, spotted in its centre — rose like a little jet of flame ; and we gathered it eagerly, though the fierce August sun wilted it in our hands. The huckleberry bushes, bending under their purple weight, we gathered in large armfuls, and took them under the shadow of the pine-trees, that we might strip them at our leisure, without being scorched by the intense glare of the sun. Armful after armful we carried and deposited in the shade, and then sat down to the task of picking them off into our pails. It was one of those New England days hotter than the tropics. Not a breath of air was stirring, not a bird sang a note, not a sound was heard, except the drowsy grating of the locusts.

" Well, now, Sam, now tell us that story about the bull."

" Lordy massy, how hot 't is ! " said Sam, lying back, and resting on the roots of a tree, with his hands folded under his head. " I 'm all in a drip of sweat."

" Well, Sam, we 'll pick off your berries if you 'll talk."

" Wal, wal, be kerful yer don't git no green ones in among 'em, else Hepsy 'll be down on me. She 's dreffal partikelar, she is. Everything has to be jest so. Ef it ain't, you 'll hear on 't. Lordy massy ! boys, she 's always

telling me I don't do nothin' for the support of the family. I leave it to you if I did n't ketch her a nice mess o' fish a Tuesday. I tell her folks can't expect to roll in money, and allers to have everything jess 'z they want it. We brought nothin' into the world with us, and it 's sartain we ken carry nothin' out; and, having food and raiment, we ought to be content. We have ben better off 'n we be now. Why, boys, I 've seen the time that I 've spent thirty-seven cents a week for nutmegs; but Hepsy hain't no gratitude: such folks hez to be brought down. Take care, now, yer ain't a-putting green ones in; be yer?"

"Sam, we sha'n't put in any at all if you don't tell us that story."

"Lordy massy! you young ones, there ain't never no contentin' yer, ef a fellow was to talk to the millennium. Wonder now if there is going to be any millennium. Wish I 'd waited, and been born in them days; 'spect things would 'a' sorter come along easier. Wal, I shall git through some way, I s'pose."

"Sam," said I, sitting back, "we 're putting all our berries into your pail; and if you don't begin to tell us a story, we won't do it."

"Lordy massy! boys, I 'm kind o' collectin' my idees. Ye have to talk a while to git a-goin', everybody does. Wal, about this 'ere story. Ye 'member that old brown house, up on the hill there, that we saw when we come round the corner? That 'ere was where old Mump Moss used to live. Old Mump was consid'able of a nice man: he took in Ike Sanders, Mis' Moss's sister's boy, to help him on the farm, and did by him pretty much ez he did by his own. Bill Moss, Mump's boy, he was a contrairy kind o' critter, and he was allers a-hectorin' Ike. He was allers puttin' off the heaviest end of everything on to him. He 'd shirk his work, and git it off on to Ike every way he could. And he allers threw it up at him that he was eatin'

his father's bread; and he watched every mouthful he ate, as if he hated to see it go down. Wal, ye see, for all that, Ike he growed up tall and strong, and a real handsome young feller; and everybody liked him. And Bill he was so gritty and contrairy, that his own mother and sisters could n't stan' him; and he was allers a-flingin' it up at 'em that they liked Ike more 'n they did him. Finally, his mother she said to him one day, 'Why should n't I,' sez she, 'when Ike 's allers pleasant to me, and doin' everything he ken fur me, and you don't do nothin' but scold.' That 'ere, you see, was a kind o' home-thrust, and Bill he did n't like Ike a bit the better for that. He did everything he could to plague him, and hector him, and sarcumvent him, and set people agin him.

"Wal, ye see, 't was the old story about Jacob and Laban over ag'in. Everything that Ike put his hand to kind o' prospered. Everybody liked him, everybody hed a good word for him, everybody helped grease his wheels. Wal, come time when he was twenty-one, old Mump he gin him a settin' out. He gin him a freedom suit o' clothes, and he gin him a good cow, and Mis' Moss she knit him up a lot o' stockings, and the gals they made him up his shirts. Then, Ike he got a place with Squire Wells, and got good wages; and he bought a little bit o' land, with a house on it, on Squire Wells's place, and took a mortgage on 't, to work off. He used to work his own land, late at night and early in the mornin', over and above givin' good days' works to the squire; and the old squire he sot all the world by him, and said he hed n't hed sich a man to work since he did n't know when.

"Wal, a body might ha' thought that when Bill had a got him out o' the house, he might ha' ben satisfied, but he was n't. He was an ugly fellow, Bill Moss was; and a body would ha' thought that everything good that happened to Ike was jest so much took from him. Come to be young

men, growed up together, and waitin' on the gals round, Ike he was pretty apt to cut Bill out. Yer see, though Bill was goin' to have the farm, and all old Mump's money, he wa'n't pleasant-spoken; and so, when the gals got a chance, they 'd allers rather go with Ike than him. Finally, there was Delily Sawin, she was about the handsomest girl there was round, and she hed all the fellers arter her; and her way was to speak 'em all fair, and keep 'em all sort o' waitin' and hopin', till she got ready to make her mind up. She 'd entertain Bill Saturday night, and she 'd tell Ike he might come Sunday night; and so Ike he was well pleased, and Bill he growled.

"Wal, there come along a gret cattle-show. Squire Wells he got it up: it was to be the gretest kind of a time, and Squire Wells he give money fur prizes. There was to be a prize on the best cow, and the best bull, and the best ox, and the best horse, and the biggest punkins and squashes and beets, and there was a prize for the best loaf o' bread, and the best pair o' stockin's, and the handsomest bed-quilt, and the rest o' women's work. Wal, yer see, there was a gret to-do about the cattle-show; and the wagons they came in from all around, — ten miles; and the gals all dressed up in their best bunnits, and they had a ball in the evenin'. Wal, ye see, it so happened that Bill and Ike each on 'em sent a bull to the cattle-show; and Ike's bull took the prize. That put the cap-sheaf on for Bill. He was jest about as much riled as a feller could be; and that evenin' Delily she danced with Ike twice as many times ez she did with him. Wal, Bill he got it round among the fellers that the jedges hed been partial; and he said, if them bulls was put together, his bull would whip Ike's all to thunder. Wal, the fellers thought 't would be kind o' fun to try 'em, and they put Ike up to it. And finally 't was agreed that Ike's bull should be driv over to old Mump's; and the Monday after the cattle-show, they should

let 'em out into the meadow together and see which was the strongest. So there was a Sunday the bulls they were both put up together in the same barn; and the 'greement was, they was n't to be looked at nor touched till the time come to turn 'em out.

"Come Sunday mornin', they got up the wagon to go to meetin'; and Mis' Moss and the gals and old Mump, they was all ready; and the old yaller dog he was standin' waitin' by the wagon, and Bill wa'n't nowhere to be found. So they sent one o' the girls up chamber to see what 'd got him; and there he was a-lyin' on the bed, and said he 'd got a dreffful headache, and did n't think he could go to meetin'. Wal, the second bell was a-tollin', and they had to drive off without him: they never mistrusted but what 't was jest so. Wal, yer see, boys, 't was that 'ere kind o' Sunday headache that sort o' gets better when the folks is all fairly into meetin'. So, when the wagon was fairly out o' sight, Bill he thought he 'd jest go and have a peek at them bulls. Wal, he looked and he peeked, and finally he thought they looked so sort o' innocent 't would n't do no harm to jest let 'em have a little run in the cow-yard afore-hand. He kind o' wanted to see how they was likely to cut up. Now, ye see, the mischief about bulls is, that a body never knows what they 's goin' to do, 'cause whatever notion takes 'em allers comes into their heads so kind o' sudden, and it 's jest a word and a blow with 'em. Wal, so fust he let out his bull, and then he went in and let out Ike's. Wal, the very fust thing that crittur did he run up to Bill's bull, full tilt, and jest gin one rip with his horns right in the side of him, and knocked him over and killed him. Did n't die right off, but he was done for; and Bill he gin a yell, and run right up and hit him with a stick, and the old feller turned right round, and come at *him*. I tell you, Bill he turned and made a straight coat-tail, rippin' and peelin' it towards the house, and the bull tearin'

on right arter him. Into the kitchen he went, and he hed n't no time to shut the door, and the bull arter him; and into the keepin'-room, and the bull arter him there. And he hed n't but jest time to git up the chamber stairs, when he heard the old feller roarin' and tearin' round there like all natur'. Fust he went to the lookin'-glass, and smashed that all to pieces. Then he h'isted the table over, and he rattled and smashed the chairs round, and made such a roarin' and noise, ye 'd ha' thought there was seven devils there; and in the midst of it Bill he looked out of the window, and see the wagon a-comin' back; and 'Lordy massy!' he thought to himself, 'the bull 'll kill every one on 'em,' and he run to the window and yelled and shouted, and they saw him, and thought the house must be afire. Finally, he bethought him of old Mump's gun, and he run round and got it, and poked it through a crack of the chamber door, and fired off bang! and shot him dead, jest as Mis' Moss and the girls was comin' into the kitchen door.

"Wal, there was, to be sure, the 'bomination o' desolation when they come in and found everything all up in a heap and broke to pieces, and the old critter a-kickin' and bleedin' all over the carpet, and Bill as pale as his shirt-tail on the chamber stairs. They had an awful mess on 't; and there was the two bulls dead and to be took care uv.

"'Wal, Bill,' said his father, 'I hope yer satisfied now. All that comes o' stayin' to home from meetin', and keepin' temporal things in yer head all day Sunday. You 've lost your own bull, you 've got Ike's to pay for, and ye 'll have the laugh on yer all round the country.'

"'I expect, father, we ken corn the meat,' says Mis' Moss, 'and maybe the hide 'll sell for something,' sez she; for she felt kind o' tender for Bill, and did n't want to bear down too hard on him.

"Wal, the story got round, and everybody was a-throwin'

it up at Bill; and Delily, in partikelar, hectored him about it till he wished the bulls had been in the Red Sea afore he 'd ever seen one on 'em. Wal, it really driv him out o' town, and he went off out West to settle, and nobody missed him much and Ike he married Delily, and they grew from better to better, till now they own jest about as pretty a farm as there is round. Yer remember that white house with green blinds, that we passed when we was goin' to the trout brook? Wal, that 'ere 's the one."

X

HOW TO FIGHT THE DEVIL

"Look here, boys," said Sam, "don't you want to go with me up to the Devil's Den this arternoon?"

"Where is the Devil's Den?" said I, with a little awe.

"Wal, it 's a longer tramp than I 've ever took ye. It 's clear up past the pickerel pond, and beyond old Skunk John's pasture lot. It 's a 'mazin' good place for raspberries; should n't wonder if we should get two three quarts there. Great rocks there higher 'n yer head; kinder solemn, 't is."

This was a delightful and seductive account, and we arranged for a walk that very afternoon.

In almost every New England village the personality of Satan has been acknowledged by calling by his name some particular rock or cave, or other natural object whose singularity would seem to suggest a more than mortal occupancy. "The Devil's Punch-Bowl," "The Devil's Wash-Bowl," "The Devil's Kettle," "The Devil's Pulpit," and "The Devil's Den," have been designations that marked places or objects of some striking natural peculiarity. Often these are found in the midst of the most beautiful and romantic scenery, and the sinister name seems to have no effect in lessening its attractions. To me, the very idea of going to the Devil's Den was full of a pleasing horror. When a boy, I always lived in the shadowy edge of that line which divides spirit land from mortal life, and it was my delight to walk among its half lights and shadows. The old graveyard, where, side by side, mouldered the

remains of Indian sachems and the ancients of English blood, was my favorite haunt. I loved to sit on the graves while the evening mists arose from them, and to fancy cloudy forms waving and beckoning. To me, this spirit land was my only refuge from the dry details of a hard, prosaic life. The schoolroom — with its hard seats rudely fashioned from slabs of rough wood, with its clumsy desks, hacked and ink-stained, with its unintelligible text-books and its unsympathetic teacher — was to me a prison out of whose weary windows I watched the pomp and glory of nature, — the free birds singing, the clouds sailing, the trees waving and whispering, — and longed, as earnestly as ever did the Psalmist, to flee far away, and wander in the wilderness.

Hence, no joy of after life — nothing that the world has now to give — can equal that joyous sense of freedom and full possession which came over me on Saturday afternoons, when I started off on a tramp with the world all before me, — the mighty, unexplored world of mysteries and possibilities, bounded only by the horizon. Ignorant alike of all science, neither botanist nor naturalist, I was studying at first-hand all that lore out of which science is made. Every plant and flower had a familiar face to me, and said something to my imagination. I knew where each was to be found, its time of coming and going, and met them year after year as returning friends.

So it was with joyous freedom that we boys rambled off with Sam this afternoon, intent to find the Devil's Den. It was a ledge of granite rocks rising in the midst of a grove of pines and white birches. The ground was yellow and slippery with the fallen needles of the pines of other days, and the glistening white stems of the birches shone through the shadows like ivory pillars. Underneath the great granite ledges, all sorts of roots and plants grappled and kept foothold; and whole armies of wild raspberries matured their fruit, rounder and juicier for growing in the shade.

In one place yawned a great rift, or cavern, as if the rocks had been violently twisted and wrenched apart, and a mighty boulder lodging in the rift had roofed it over, making a cavern of most seductive darkness and depth. This was the Devil's Den; and after we had picked our pail full of berries, we sat down there to rest.

"Sam, do you suppose the Devil ever was here?" said I. "What do they call this his den for?"

"Massy, child! that 'ere was in old witch times. There used to be witch meetin's held here, and awful doin's; they used to have witch sabba' days and witch sacraments, and sell their souls to the old boy."

"What should they want to do that for?"

"Wal, sure enough; what was it for? I can't make out that the Devil ever gin 'em anything, any on 'em. They wa'n't no richer, nor did n't get no more 'n this world than the rest; and they was took and hung; and then ef they went to torment after that, they hed a pretty bad bargain on 't, I say."

"Well, people don't do such things any more, do they?" said I.

"No," said Sam. "Since the great fuss and row-de-dow about it, it 's kind o' died out; but there 's those, I s'pose, that hez dealin's with the old boy. Folks du say that old Ketury was a witch, and that ef 't ben in old times, she 'd 'a' hed her neck stretched; but she lived and died in peace."

"But do you think," said I, now proposing the question that lay nearest my heart, "that the Devil can hurt us?"

"That depends consid'able on how you take him," said Sam. "Ye see, come to a straight out-an'-out fight with him, he 'll git the better on yer."

"But," said I, "Christian did fight Apollyon, and got him down too."

I had no more doubt in those days that this was an his-

toric fact than I had of the existence of Romulus and Remus and the wolf.

"Wal, that 'ere wa'n't jest like real things: they say that 'ere 's an allegory. But I 'll tell ye how old Sarah Bunganuck fit the Devil, when he 'peared to her. Ye see, old Sarah she was one of the converted Injuns, and a good old critter she was too; worked hard and got her livin' honest. She made baskets, and she made brooms, and she used to pick young wintergreen and tie it up in bunches, and dig sassafras and ginsing to make beer; and she got her a little bit o' land, right alongside o' old Black Hoss John's white-birch wood-lot.

"Now, I 've heerd some o' these 'ere modern ministers that come down from Cambridge college, and are larnt about everything in creation, they say there ain't no devil, and the reason on 't is, 'cause there can't be none. These 'ere fellers is so sort o' green! — they don't mean no harm, but they don't know nothin' about nobody that does. If they 'd ha' known old Black Hoss John, they 'd ha' been putty sure there was a devil. He was jest the crossest, ugliest critter that ever ye see, and he was ugly jest for the sake o' ugliness. He could n't bear to let the boys pick huckleberries in his paster lots, when he did n't pick 'em himself; and he was allers jawin' me 'cause I would go trout-fishin' in one o' his pasters. Jest ez if the trout that swims wa'n't the Lord's, and jest ez much mine as his. He grudged every critter everything; and if he 'd ha' hed his will and way, every bird would ha' fell down dead that picked up a worm on his grounds. He was jest as nippin' as a black frost. Old Black Hoss did n't git drunk in a regerlar way, like Uncle Eph and Toddy Whitney, and the rest o' them boys. But he jest sot at home, a-soakin' on cider, till he was crosser 'n a bear with a sore head. Old Black Hoss hed a special spite agin old Sarah. He said she was an old witch and an old thief, and that she stole things off'n his grounds, when

everybody knew that she was a regerlar church member, and as decent an old critter as there was goin'. As to her stealin', she did n't do nothin' but pick huckleberries and grapes, and git chesnuts and wannuts and butternuts, and them 'ere wild things that 's the Lord's, grow on whose land they will, and is free to all. I 've hearn 'em tell that, over in the old country, the poor was kept under so that they could n't shoot a bird, nor ketch a fish, nor gather no nuts, nor do nothin' to keep from starvin', 'cause the quality folks they thought they owned everything, 'way down to the middle of the earth and clear up to the stars. We never hed no sech doin's this side of the water, thank the Lord ! We 've allers been free to have the chesnuts and the wannuts and the grapes and the huckleberries and the strawberries ef we could git 'em, and ketch fish when and where we was a mind to. Lordy massy ! your grandthur's old Cæsar he used to call the pond his pork-pot. He 'd jest go down and throw in a line and ketch his dinner. Wal, old Black Hoss he knowed the law was so, and he could n't do nothin' agin her by law ; but he sarved her out every mean trick he could think of. He used to go and stan' and lean over her garden-gate and jaw at her an hour at a time ; but old Sarah she had the Injun in her ; she did n't run to talk much : she used to jest keep on with her weedin' and her work, jest 's if he wa'n't there, and that made old Black Hoss madder 'n ever ; and he thought he 'd try and frighten her off'n the ground, by makin' on her believe he was the Devil. So one time, when he 'd been killin' a beef critter, they took off the skin with the horns and all on ; and old Black Hoss he says to Toddy and Eph and Loker, ' You jest come up to-night, and see how I 'll frighten old Sarah Bunganuck.'

" Wal, Toddy and Eph and Loker, they hed n't no better to do, and they thought they 'd jest go round and see. Ye see, 't was a moonlight night, and old Sarah — she

was an industrious critter — she was cuttin' white-birch brush for brooms in the paster lot. Wal, old Black Hoss he wrapped the critter's skin round him, with the horns on his head, and come and stood by the fence, and begun to roar and make a noise. Old Sarah she kept right on with her work, cuttin' her brush and pilin' on 't up, and jest let him roar. Wal, old Black Hoss felt putty foolish, 'specially ez the fellers were waitin' to see how she took it. So he calls out in a grum voice, —

"'Woman, don't ye know who I be?'

"'No,' says she quite quiet, 'I don't know who yer be.'

"'Wal, I'm the Devil,' sez he.

"'Ye be?' says old Sarah. 'Poor old critter, how I pity ye!' and she never gin him another word, but jest bundled up her broom-stuff, and took it on her back and walked off, and old Black Hoss he stood there mighty foolish with his skin and horns; and so he had the laugh agin him, 'cause Eph and Loker they went and told the story down to the tavern, and he felt awful cheap to think old Sarah had got the upper hands on him.

"Wal, ye see boys, that 'ere's jest the way to fight the Devil. Jest keep straight on with what ye're doin', and don't ye mind him, and he can't do nothing to ye."

XI

LAUGHIN' IN MEETIN'

We were in disgrace, we boys; and the reason of it was this: we had laughed out in meeting-time! To be sure, the occasion was a trying one, even to more disciplined nerves. Parson Lothrop had exchanged pulpits with Parson Summeral, of North Wearem. Now, Parson Summeral was a man in the very outset likely to provoke the risibles of unspiritualized juveniles. He was a thin, wiry, frisky little man, in a powdered white wig, black tights, and silk stockings, with bright knee-buckles and shoe-buckles; with round, dark, snapping eyes; and a curious, high, cracked, squeaking voice, the very first tones of which made all the children stare and giggle. The news that Parson Summeral was going to preach in our village spread abroad among us as a prelude to something funny. It had a flavor like the charm of circus-acting; and, on the Sunday morning of our story, we went to the house of God in a very hilarious state, all ready to set off in a laugh on the slightest provocation.

The occasion was not long wanting. Parson Lothrop had a favorite dog yclept Trip, whose behavior in meeting was notoriously far from that edifying pattern which befits a minister's dog on Sundays. Trip was a nervous dog, and a dog that never could be taught to conceal his emotions or to respect conventionalities. If anything about the performance in the singers' seat did not please him, he was apt to express himself in a lugubrious howl. If the sermon was longer than suited him, he would gape with such a

loud creak of his jaws as would arouse everybody's attention. If the flies disturbed his afternoon's nap, he would give sudden snarls or snaps; or, if anything troubled his dreams, he would bark out in his sleep in a manner not only to dispel his own slumbers, but those of certain worthy deacons and old ladies whose sanctuary repose was thereby sorely broken and troubled. For all these reasons, Madam Lothrop had been forced, as a general thing, to deny Trip the usual sanctuary privileges of good family dogs in that age, and shut him up on Sundays to private meditation. Trip, of course, was only the more set on attendance, and would hide behind doors, jump out windows, sneak through byways and alleys, and lie hid till the second bell had done tolling, when suddenly he would appear in the broad aisle, innocent and happy, and take his seat as composedly as any member of the congregation.

Imagine us youngsters on the *qui vive* with excitement at seeing Parson Summeral frisk up into the pulpit with all the vivacity of a black grasshopper. We looked at each other, and giggled very cautiously, with due respect to Aunt Lois's sharp observation.

At first, there was only a mild, quiet simmering of giggle compressed decorously within the bounds of propriety; and we pursed our muscles up with stringent resolution whenever we caught the apprehensive eye of our elders.

But when, directly after the closing notes of the tolling second bell, Master Trip walked gravely up the front aisle, and, seating himself squarely in front of the pulpit, raised his nose with a critical air toward the scene of the forthcoming performance, it was too much for us: the repression was almost convulsive. Trip wore an alert, attentive air, befitting a sound, orthodox dog who smells a possible heresy, and deems it his duty to watch the performances narrowly. Evidently he felt called upon to see who and what were to occupy that pulpit in his master's absence.

Up rose Parson Summeral; and up went Trip's nose, vibrating with intense attention.

The Parson began in his high-cracked voice to intone the hymn, —

"Sing to the Lord aloud,"

when Trip broke into a dismal howl.

The Parson went on to give directions to the deacon, in the same voice in which he had been reading, so that the whole effect of the performance was somewhat as follows: —

"'Sing to the Lord aloud.'

"(Please to turn out that dog), —

"'And make a joyful noise.'"

The dog was turned out, and the choir did their best to make a joyful noise; but we boys were upset for the day, delivered over to the temptations of Satan, and plunged in waves and billows of hysterical giggle, from which neither winks nor frowns from Aunt Lois, nor the awful fear of the tithing-man, nor the comforting bits of fennel and orange-peel passed us by grandmother, could recover us.

Everybody felt, to be sure, that here was a trial that called for some indulgence. Hard faces, even among the stoniest saints, betrayed a transient quiver of the risible muscles; old ladies put up their fans; youths and maidens in the singers' seat laughed outright; and, for the moment, a general snicker among the children was pardoned. But I was one of that luckless kind, whose nerves, once set in vibration, could not be composed. When the reign of gravity and decorum had returned, Harry and I sat by each other, shaking with suppressed laughter. Everything in the subsequent exercises took a funny turn, and in the long prayer, when everybody else was still and decorous, the whole scene came over me with such overpowering force, that I exploded with laughter, and had to be taken out of meeting and marched home by Aunt Lois, as a convicted

criminal. What especially moved her indignation was, that, the more she rebuked and upbraided, the more I laughed, till the tears rolled down my cheeks; which Aunt Lois construed into willful disrespect to her authority, and resented accordingly.

By Sunday evening, as we gathered around the fire, the reaction from undue gayety to sobriety had taken place; and we were in a pensive and penitent state. Grandmother was gracious and forgiving; but Aunt Lois still preserved that frosty air of reprobation which she held to be a salutary means of quickening our consciences for the future. It was, therefore, with unusual delight that we saw our old friend Sam come in, and sit himself quietly down on the block in the chimney-corner. With Sam we felt assured of indulgence and patronage; for, though always rigidly moral and instructive in his turn of mind, he had that fellow-feeling for transgressors which is characteristic of the loose-jointed, easy-going style of his individuality.

"Lordy massy, boys — yis," said Sam virtuously, in view of some of Aunt Lois's thrusts, "ye ought never to laugh nor cut up in meetin'; that 'ere 's so: but then there is times when the best on us gets took down. We gets took unawares, ye see, — even ministers does. Yis, natur' will git the upper hand afore they know it."

"Why, Sam, ministers don't ever laugh in meetin'! do they?"

We put the question with wide eyes. Such a supposition bordered on profanity, we thought: it was approaching the sin of Uzzah, who unwarily touched the ark of the Lord.

"Laws, yes. Why, hev n't you never heard how there was a council held to try Parson Morrel for laughin' out in prayer-time?"

"Laughing in prayer-time!" we both repeated, with uplifted hands and eyes.

My grandfather's mild face became luminous with a sup-

pressed smile, which brightened it as the moon does a cloud; but he said nothing.

"Yes, yes," said my grandmother, "that affair did make a dreadful scandal in the time on 't! But Parson Morrel was a good man; and I 'm glad the council was n't hard on him."

"Wal," said Sam Lawson, "after all, it was more Ike Babbit's fault than 't was anybody's. Ye see, Ike he was allers for gettin' what he could out o' the town; and he would feed his sheep on the meetin'-house green. Somehow or other, Ike's fences allers contrived to give out, come Sunday, and up would come his sheep; and Ike was too pious to drive 'em back Sunday, and so there they was. He was talked to enough about it: 'cause, ye see, to hev sheep and lambs a-ba-a-in' and a-blatin' all prayer and sermon time wa'n't the thing. 'Member that 'ere old meetin'-house up to the North End, down under Blueberry Hill, the land sort o' sloped down, so as a body hed to come into the meetin'-house steppin' down instead o' up.

"Fact was, they said 't was put there 'cause the land wa'n't good for nothin' else; and the folks thought puttin' a meetin'-house on 't would be a clear savin'. But Parson Morrel he did n't like it, and was free to tell 'em his mind on 't, — that 't was like bringin' the lame and the blind to the Lord's service; but there 't was.

"There wa'n't a better minister, nor no one more set by in all the State, than Parson Morrel. His doctrines was right up and down, good and sharp; and he give saints and sinners their meat in due season; and for consolin' and comfortin' widders and orphans, Parson Morrel hed n't his match. The women sot lots by him; and he was allus ready to take tea round, and make things pleasant and comfortable; and he hed a good story for every one, and a word for the children, and maybe an apple or a cooky in his pocket for 'em. Wal, you know there ain't no pleasin'

everybody; and ef Gabriel himself, right down out o' heaven, was to come and be a minister, I expect there 'd be a pickin' at his wings, and sort o' fault-findin'. Now, Aunt Jerushy Scran and Aunt Polly Hokum they sed Parson Morrel wa'n't solemn enough. Ye see, there 's them that thinks that a minister ought to be just like the town hearse, so that ye think of death, judgment, and eternity, and nothin' else, when ye see him round; and ef they see a man rosy and chipper, and hevin' a pretty nice, sociable sort of a time, why they say he ain't spiritooal minded. But, in my times, I 've seen ministers the most awakenin' kind in the pulpit that was the liveliest when they was out on 't. There is a time to laugh, Scriptur' says; though some folks never seem to remember that 'ere."

"But, Sam, how came you to say it was Ike Babbit's fault? What was it about the sheep?"

"Oh, wal, yis! I 'm a-comin' to that 'ere. It was all about them sheep. I expect they was the instrument the Devel sot to work to tempt Parson Morrel to laugh in prayer-time.

"Ye see, there was old Dick, Ike's bell-wether, was the fightin'est old critter that ever yer see. Why, Dick would butt at his own shadder; and everybody said it was a shame the old critter should be left to run loose, 'cause he run at the children, and scared the women half out their wits. Wal, I used to live out in that parish in them days. And Lem Sudoc and I used to go out sparkin' Sunday nights, to see the Larkin gals; and we had to go right 'cross the lot where Dick was: so we used to go and stand at the fence, and call. And Dick would see us, and put down his head, and run at us full chisel, and come bunt agin the fence; and then I 'd ketch him by the horns, and hold him while Lem run and got over the fence t'other side the lot; and then I 'd let go: and Lem would holler, and shake a stick at him, and away he 'd go full butt at

Lem; and Lem would ketch his horns, and hold him till I came over, — that was the way we managed Dick; but, I tell you, ef he come sudden up behind a fellow, he 'd give him a butt in the small of his back that would make him run on all fours one while. He was a great rogue, — Dick was. Wal, that summer, I remember they hed old Deacon Titkins for tithing-man; and I tell you he give it to the boys lively. There wa'n't no sleepin' nor no playin'; for the deacon hed eyes like a gimblet, and he was quick as a cat, and the youngsters hed to look out for themselves. It did really seem as if the deacon was like them four beasts in the Revelations that was full o' eyes behind and before; for which ever way he was standin', if you gave only a wink, he was down on you, and hit you a tap with his stick. I know once Lem Sudoc jist wrote two words in the psalm-book and passed to Kesiah Larkin; and the deacon give him such a tap that Lem grew red as a beet, and vowed he 'd be up with him some day for that.

"Well, Lordy massy, folks that is so chipper and high steppin' has to hev their come-downs; and the deacon he hed to hev his.

"That 'ere Sunday, — I 'member it now jest as well as if 't was yesterday, — the parson he give us his gret sermon, reconcilin' decrees and free agency: everybody said that 'ere sermon was a masterpiece. He preached it up to Cambridge at Commencement, that year. Wal, it so happened it was one o' them bilin' hot days that come in August, when you can fairly hear the huckleberries a-sizzlin' and cookin' on the bushes, and the locust keeps a-gratin' like a red-hot saw. Wal, such times, decrees or no decrees, the best on us will get sleepy. The old meetin'-house stood right down at the foot of a hill that kep' off all the wind; and the sun blazed away at them gret west winders: and there was pretty sleepy times there. Wal, the deacon he flew round a spell, and woke up the children,

and tapped the boys on the head, and kep' everything straight as he could, till the sermon was most through, when he railly got most tuckered out; and he took a chair, and he sot down in the door right opposite the minister, and fairly got asleep himself, jest as the minister got up to make the last prayer.

"Wal, Parson Morrel hed a way o' prayin' with his eyes open. Folks said it wa'n't the best way: but it was Parson Morrel's way, anyhow: and so, as he was prayin', he could n't help seein' that Deacon Titkins was a-noddin' and a-bobbin' out toward the place where old Dick was feedin' with the sheep, front o' the meetin'-house door.

"Lem and me we was sittin' where we could look out; and we jest sees old Dick stop feedin' and look at the deacon. The deacon hed a little round head as smooth as an apple, with a nice powdered wig on it: and he sot there makin' bobs and bows; and Dick begun to think it was suthin sort o' pussonal. Lem and me was sittin' jest where we could look out and see the hull picter; and Lem was fit to split.

"'Good, now,' says he: 'that critter 'll pay the deacon off lively, pretty soon.'

"The deacon bobbed his head a spell; and old Dick he shook his horns, and stamped at him sort o' threat'nin'. Finally the deacon he give a great bow, and brought his head right down at him; and old Dick he sot out full tilt and come down on him ker chunk, and knocked him head over heels into the broad aisle: and his wig flew one way and he t' other; and Dick made a lunge at it, as it flew, and carried it off on his horns.

"Wal, you may believe, that broke up the meetin' for one while: for Parson Morrel laughed out; and all the gals and boys they stomped and roared. And the old deacon he got up and begun rubbin' his shins, 'cause he did n't see the joke on 't.

"'You don't orter laugh,' says he: 'it 's no laughin' matter; it 's a solemn thing,' says he. 'I might hev been sent into 'tarnity by that darned critter,' says he. Then they all roared and haw-hawed the more, to see the deacon dancin' round with his little shiny head, so smooth a fly would trip up on 't. 'I believe, my soul, you 'd laugh to see me in my grave,' says he.

"Wal, the truth on 't was, 't was jist one of them bustin' up times that natur has, when there ain't nothin' for it but to give in: 't was jest like the ice breakin' up in the Charles River, — it all come at once, and no whoa to 't. Sunday or no Sunday, sin or no sin, the most on 'em laughed till they cried, and could n't help it.

"But the deacon, he went home feelin' pretty sore about it. Lem Sudoc, he picked up his wig, and handed it to him. Says he, 'Old Dick was playin' tithin'-man, wa'n't he, deacon? Teach you to make allowance for other folks that get sleepy.'

"Then Miss Titkins she went over to Aunt Jerushy Scran's and Aunt Polly Hokum's; and they hed a pot o' tea over it, and 'greed it was awful of Parson Morrel to set sich an example, and suthin' hed got to be done about it. Miss Hokum said she allers knew that Parson Morrel hed n't no spiritooality; and now it hed broke out into open sin, and led all the rest of 'em into it; and Miss Titkins, she said such a man wa'n't fit to preach; and Miss Hokum said she could n't never hear him agin: and the next Sunday the deacon and his wife they hitched up and driv eight miles over to Parson Lothrop's and took Aunt Polly on the back seat.

"Wal, the thing growed and growed, till it seemed as if there wa'n't nothin' else talked about, 'cause Aunt Polly and Miss Titkins and Jerushy Scran they did n't do nothin' but talk about it; and that sot everybody else a-talkin'.

"Finally, it was 'greed they must hev a council to settle

the hash. So all the wimmen they went to choppin' mince, and makin' up pumpkin pies and cranberry tarts, and b'ilin' doughnuts, — gettin' ready for the ministers and delegates; 'cause councils always eats powerful: and they hed quite a stir, like a gineral trainin'. The hosses they was hitched all up and down the stalls, a-stompin' and switchin' their tails; and all the wimmen was a-talkin'; and they hed up everybody round for witnesses. And finally Parson Morrel he says, 'Brethren,' says he, 'jest let me tell you the story jest as it happened; and, if you don't every one of you laugh as hard as I did, why, then, I 'll give up.'

"The parson he was a master-hand at settin' off a story; and, afore he 'd done, he got 'em all in sich a roar they did n't know where to leave off. Finally, they give sentence that there hed n't no temptation took him but such as is common to man; but they advised him afterwards allers to pray with his eyes shet; and the parson he confessed he orter 'a done it, and meant to do better in future: and so they settled it.

"So, boys," said Sam, who always drew a moral, "ye see, it larns you, you must take care what ye look at, ef ye want to keep from laughin' in meetin'."

XII

TOM TOOTHACRE'S GHOST STORY

"WHAT is it about that old house in Sherbourne?" said Aunt Nabby to Sam Lawson, as he sat drooping over the coals of a great fire one October evening.

Aunt Lois was gone to Boston on a visit; and, the smart spice of her skepticism being absent, we felt the more freedom to start our story-teller on one of his legends.

Aunt Nabby sat trotting her knitting-needles on a blue-mixed yarn stocking. Grandmamma was knitting in unison at the other side of the fire. Grandfather sat studying "The Boston Courier." The wind outside was sighing in fitful wails, creaking the pantry-doors, occasionally puffing in a vicious gust down the broad throat of the chimney. It was a drizzly, sleety evening; and the wet lilac-bushes now and then rattled and splashed against the window as the wind moaned and whispered through them.

We boys had made preparation for a comfortable evening. We had enticed Sam to the chimney corner, and drawn him a mug of cider. We had set down a row of apples to roast on the hearth, which even now were giving faint sighs and sputters as their plump sides burst in the genial heat. The big oak back-log simmered and bubbled, and distilled large drops down amid the ashes; and the great hickory forestick had just burned out into solid bright coals, faintly skimmed over with white ashes. The whole area of the big chimney was full of a sleepy warmth and brightness just calculated to call forth fancies and visions. It only wanted somebody now to set Sam off;

and Aunt Nabby broached the ever interesting subject of haunted houses.

"Wal, now, Miss Badger," said Sam, "I ben over there, and walked round that 'are house consid'able; and I talked with Granny Hokum and Aunt Polly, and they 've putty much come to the conclusion that they 'll hev to move out on 't. Ye see, these 'ere noises, they keep 'em awake nights; and Aunt Polly, she gets 'stericky; and Hannah Jane, she says, ef they stay in the house, *she* can't live with 'em no longer. And what can them lone women do without Hannah Jane? Why, Hannah Jane, she says these two months past she 's seen a woman, regular, walking up and down the front hall between twelve and one o'clock at night; and it 's jist the image and body of old Ma'am Tillotson, Parson Hokum's mother, that everybody know'd was a thunderin' kind o' woman, that kep' everything in a muss while she was alive. What the old critter 's up to now there ain't no knowin'. Some folks seems to think it 's a sign Granny Hokum's time 's comin'. But Lordy massy! says she to me, says she, 'Why, Sam, I don't know nothin' what I 've done, that Ma'am Tillotson should be set loose on me.' Anyway they 've all got so narvy, that Jed Hokum has ben up from Needham, and is goin' to cart 'em all over to live with him. Jed, he 's for hushin' on 't up, ' cause he says it brings a bad name on the property.

"Wal, I talked with Jed about it; and says I to Jed, says I, 'Now, ef you 'll take my advice, jist you give that 'are old house a regular overhaulin', and paint it over with tew coats o' paint, and that 'are 'll clear 'em out, if anything will. Ghosts is like bedbugs, — they can't stan' fresh paint,' says I. 'They allers clear out. I 've seen it tried on a ship that got haunted.' "

"Why, Sam, do ships get haunted?"

"To be sure they do! — haunted the wust kind. Why,

I could tell ye a story 'd make your har rise on eend, only I 'm 'fraid of frightening boys when they 're jist going to bed."

"Oh! you can't frighten Horace," said my grandmother. "He will go and sit out there in the graveyard till nine o'clock nights, spite of all I tell him."

"Do tell, Sam!" we urged. "What was it about the ship?"

Sam lifted his mug of cider, deliberately turned it round and round in his hands, eyed it affectionately, took a long drink, and set it down in front of him on the hearth, and began: —

"Ye 'member I telled you how I went to sea down East, when I was a boy, 'long with Tom Toothacre. Wal, Tom, he reeled off a yarn one night that was 'bout the toughest I ever hed the pullin' on. And it come all straight, too, from Tom. 'T wa'n't none o' yer hearsay: 't was what he seen with his own eyes. Now, there wa'n't no nonsense 'bout Tom, not a bit on 't; and he wa'n't afeared o' the divil himse'f; and he ginally saw through things about as straight as things could be seen through. This 'ere happened when Tom was mate o' The Albatross, and they was a-runnin' up to the banks for a fare o' fish. The Albatross was as handsome a craft as ever ye see; and Cap'n Sim Witherspoon, he was skipper — a rail nice likely man he was. I heard Tom tell this 'ere one night to the boys on The Brilliant, when they was all a-settin' round the stove in the cabin one foggy night that we was to anchor in Frenchman's Bay, and all kind o' layin' off loose.

"Tom, he said they was having a famous run up to the Banks. There was a spankin' southerly, that blew 'em along like all natur'; and they was hevin' the best kind of a time, when this 'ere southerly brought a pesky fog down on 'em, and it grew thicker than hasty-puddin'. Ye see, that 'are 's the pester o' these 'ere southerlies: they 's the

biggest fog-breeders there is goin'. And so, putty soon, you could n't see half ship's length afore you.

"Wal, they all was down to supper, except Dan Sawyer at the wheel, when there come sich a crash as if heaven and earth was a-splittin', and then a scrapin' and thump bumpin' under the ship, and gin 'em sich a h'ist that the pot o' beans went rollin', and brought up jam ag'in the bulkhead; and the fellers was keeled over, — men and pork and beans kinder permiscus.

"'The divil!' says Tom Toothacre, 'we 've run down somebody. Look out, up there!'

"Dan, he shoved the helm hard down, and put her up to the wind, and sung out, 'Lordy massy! we 've struck her right amidships!'

"'Struck what?' they all yelled, and tumbled up on deck.

"'Why, a little schooner,' says Dan. 'Did n't see her till we was right on her. She 's gone down tack and sheet. Look! there 's part o' the wreck a-floating off: don't ye see?'

"Wal, they did n't see, 'cause it was so thick you could n't hardly see your hand afore your face. But they put about, and sent out a boat, and kind o' sarched round; but, Lordy massy! ye might as well looked for a drop of water in the Atlantic Ocean. Whoever they was, it was all done gone and over with 'em for this life, poor critters!

"Tom says they felt confoundedly about it; but what could they do? Lordy massy! what can any on us do? There 's places where folks jest lets go 'cause they hes to. Things ain't as they want 'em, and they can't alter 'em. Sailors ain't so rough as they look: they 's feelin' critters, come to put things right to 'em. And there was n't one on 'em who would n't 'a' worked all night for a chance o' saving some o' them poor fellows. But there 't was, and 't wa'n't no use trying.

"Wal, so they sailed on: and by 'm by the wind kind o' chopped round no'theast, and then come round east, and sot in for one of them regular east blows and drizzles that takes the starch out o' fellers more 'n a regular storm. So they concluded they might as well put into a little bay there, and come to anchor.

"So they sot an anchor-watch, and all turned in.

"Wal, now comes the particular curus part o' Tom's story; and it was more curus 'cause Tom was one that would n't 'a' believed no other man that had told it. Tom was one o' your sort of philosophers. He was fer lookin' into things, and wa'n't in no hurry 'bout believin'; so that this 'un was more 'markable on account of its bein' Tom that seen it than ef it had ben others.

"Tom says that night he hed a pesky toothache that sort o' kep' grumblin' and jumpin' so he could n't go to sleep; and he lay in his bunk, a-turnin' this way and that, till long past twelve o'clock.

"Tom had a 'thwart-ship bunk where he could see into every bunk on board, except Bob Coffin's, and Bob was on the anchor-watch. Wal, he lay there, tryin' to go to sleep, hearin' the men snorin' like bullfrogs in a swamp, and watchin' the lantern a-swingin' back and forward; and the sou'westers and pea-jackets were kinder throwin' their long shadders up and down as the vessel sort o' rolled and pitched, — for there was a heavy swell on, — and then he 'd hear Bob Coffin tramp, tramp, trampin' overhead, — for Bob had a pretty heavy foot of his own, — and all sort o' mixed up together with Tom's toothache, so he could n't get to sleep. Finally, Tom, he bit off a great chaw o' 'baccy, and got it well sot in his cheek, and kind o' turned over to lie on 't, and ease the pain. Wal, he says he laid a spell, and dropped off in a sort o' doze, when he woke in sich a chill his teeth chattered, and the pain came on like a knife, and he bounced over, thinking the fire had gone out in the stove.

"Wal, sure enough, he see a man a-crouching over the stove, with his back to him, a-stretchin' out his hands to warm 'em. He had on a sou'wester and a pea-jacket with a red tippet round his neck; and his clothes was drippin' as if he 'd just come in from a rain.

"'What the divil!' says Tom. And he riz right up, and rubbed his eyes. 'Bill Bridges,' says he, 'what shine be you up to now?' For Bill was a master oneasy critter, and allers a-gettin' up and walkin' nights; and Tom, he thought it was Bill. But in a minute he looked over, and there, sure enough, was Bill, fast asleep in his bunk, mouth wide open, snoring like a Jericho ram's-horn. Tom looked round, and counted every man in his bunk, and then says he, 'Who the divil is this? for there 's Bob Coffin on deck, and the rest is all here.'

"Wal, Tom wa'n't a man to be put under too easy. He hed his thoughts about him allers; and the fust he thought in every pinch was what to do. So he sot considerin' a minute, sort o' winkin' his eyes to be sure he saw straight, when, sure enough, there come another man backin' down the companion-way.

"'Wal, there 's Bob Coffin, anyhow,' says Tom to himself. But no, the other man he turned: Tom see his face; and, sure as you live, it was the face of a dead corpse. Its eyes was sot, and it jest came as still across the cabin, and sot down by the stove and kind o' shivered, and put out its hands as if it was gettin' warm.

"Tom said that there was a cold air round in the cabin, as if an iceberg was comin' near, and he felt cold chills running down his back; but he jumped out of his bunk, and took a step forward. 'Speak!' says he. 'Who be you? and what do you want?'

"They never spoke, nor looked up, but kept kind o' shivering and crouching over the stove.

"'Wal,' says Tom, 'I 'll see who you be, anyhow.'

And he walked right up to the last man that come in, and reached out to catch hold of his coat-collar; but his hand jest went through him like moonshine, and in a minute he all faded away; and when he turned round the other one was gone too. Tom stood there, looking this way and that; but there warn't nothing but the old stove, and the lantern swingin', and the men all snorin' round in their bunks. Tom, he sung out to Bob Coffin. 'Hullo, up there!' says he. But Bob never answered, and Tom, he went up, and found Bob down on his knees, his teeth a-chatterin' like a bag o' nails, trying to say his prayers; and all he could think of was, 'Now I lay me,' and he kep' going that over and over. Ye see, boys, Bob was a drefful wicked, swearin' critter, and had n't said no prayers since he was tew years old, and it did n't come natural to him. Tom give a grip on his collar, and shook him. 'Hold yer yawp,' said he. 'What you howlin' about? What 's up?'

"'Oh, Lordy massy!' says Bob, 'we 're sent for, — all on us, — there 's been two on 'em: both on 'em went right by me!'

"Wal, Tom, he hed his own thoughts; but he was bound to get to the bottom of things, anyway. Ef 't was the devil, well and good — he wanted to know it. Tom jest wanted to hev the matter settled one way or t'other: so he got Bob sort o' stroked down, and made him tell what he saw.

"Bob, he stood to it that he was a-standin' right for'ard, a-leanin' on the windlass, and kind o' hummin' a tune, when he looked down, and see a sort o' queer light in the fog; and he went and took a look over the bows, when up came a man's head in a sort of sou'wester, and then a pair of hands, and catched at the bob-stay; and then the hull figger of a man riz right out o' the water, and clim up on the martingale till he could reach the jib-stay with his hands, and then he swung himself right up on to the bow-

sprit, and stepped aboard, and went past Bob, right aft, and down into the cabin. And he had n't more 'n got down, afore he turned round, and there was another comin' in over the bowsprit, and he went by him, and down below: so there was two on 'em, jest as Tom had seen in the cabin.

"Tom he studied on it a spell, and finally says he, 'Bob, let you and me keep this 'ere to ourselves, and see ef it 'll come again. Ef it don't, well and good: ef it does — why, we 'll see about it.'

"But Tom he told Cap'n Witherspoon, and the Cap'n he agreed to keep an eye out the next night. But there warn't nothing said to the rest o' the men.

"Wal, the next night they put Bill Bridges on the watch. The fog had lifted, and they had a fair wind, and was going on steady. The men all turned in, and went fast asleep, except Cap'n Witherspoon, Tom, and Bob Coffin. Wal, sure enough, 'twixt twelve and one o'clock, the same thing came over, only there war four men 'stead o' two. They come in jes' so over the bowsprit, and they looked neither to right nor left, but clim down stairs, and sot down, and crouched and shivered over the stove jist like the others. Wal, Bill Bridges, he came tearin' down like a wild-cat, frightened half out o' his wits, screechin' 'Lord, have mercy! we 're all goin' to the devil!' And then they all vanished.

"'Now, Cap'n, what 's to be done?' says Tom. 'Ef these 'ere fellows is to take passage, we can't do nothin' with the boys: that 's clear.'

"Wal, so it turned out; for, come next night, there was six on 'em come in, and the story got round, and the boys was all on eend. There wa'n't no doin' nothin' with 'em. Ye see, it 's allers jest so. Not but what dead folks is jest as 'spectable as they was afore they 's dead. These might 'a' been as good fellers as any aboard; but it 's human natur'. The minute a feller 's dead, why, you sort o' don't

know 'bout him; and it 's kind o' skeery hevin' on him round; and so 't wa'n't no wonder the boys did n't feel as if they could go on with the vy'ge, ef these 'ere fellers was all to take passage. Come to look, too, there war consid'a-ble of a leak stove in the vessel; and the boys, they all stood to it, ef they went farther, that they 'd all go to the bottom. For, ye see, once the story got a-goin', every one on 'em saw a new thing every night. One on 'em saw the bait-mill a-grindin', without no hands to grind it; and another saw fellers up aloft, workin' in the sails. Wal, the fact war, they jest had to put about, — run back to Castine.

"Wal, the owners, they hushed up things the best they could; and they put the vessel on the stocks, and worked her over, and put a new coat o' paint on her, and called her The Betsey Ann; and she went a good vy'ge to the Banks, and brought home the biggest fare o' fish that had been for a long time; and she 's made good vy'ges ever since; and that jest proves what I 've been a-saying, — that there 's nothin' to drive out ghosts like fresh paint."

XIII

THE PARSON'S HORSE-RACE

"WAL, now, this 'ere does beat all! I would n't 'a' thought it o' the deacon."

So spoke Sam Lawson, drooping in a discouraged, contemplative attitude in front of an equally discouraged looking horse, that had just been brought to him by the Widow Simpkins for medical treatment. Among Sam's many accomplishments he was reckoned in the neighborhood an oracle in all matters of this kind, especially by women, whose helplessness in meeting such emergencies found unfailing solace under his compassionate willingness to attend to any business that did not strictly belong to him, and from which no pecuniary return was to be expected.

The Widow Simpkins had bought this horse of Deacon Atkins, apparently a fairly well-appointed brute, and capable as he was good-looking. A short, easy drive, when the deacon held the reins, had shown off his points to advantage; and the widow's small stock of ready savings had come forth freely in payment for what she thought was a bargain. When, soon after coming into possession, she discovered that her horse, if driven with any haste, panted in a fearful manner, and that he appeared to be growing lame, she waxed wroth, and went to the deacon in anger, to be met only with the smooth reminder that the animal was all right when she took him; that she had seen him tried herself. The widow was of a nature somewhat spicy, and expressed herself warmly: "It 's a cheat and a shame, and I 'll take the law on ye!"

"What law will you take?" said the unmoved deacon. "Was n't it a fair bargain?"

"I 'll take the law of God," said the widow with impotent indignation; and she departed to pour her cares and trials into the ever ready ear of Sam. Having assumed the care of the animal, he now sat contemplating it in a sort of trance of melancholy reflection.

"Why, boys!" he broke out, "why did n't she come to me afore she bought this critter? Why, I knew all about him! That 'are critter was jest ruined a year ago last summer, when Tom, the deacon's boy there, come home from college. Tom driv him over to Sherburne and back that 'are hot Fourth of July. 'Member it, cause I saw the critter when he come home. I sot up with Tom takin' care of him all night. That 'are critter had the thumps all night, and he hain't never been good for nothin' since. I telled the deacon he was a gone hoss then, and would n't never be good for nothin'. The deacon, he took off his shoes, and let him run to pastur' all summer, and he 's ben a-feedin' and nussin' on him up; and now he 's put him off on the widder. I would n't 'a' thought it o' the deacon! Why, this hoss 'll never be no good to her! That 'are 's a used-up critter, any fool may see! He 'll mabbe do for about a quarter of an hour on a smooth road; but come to drive him as a body wants to drive, why, he blows like my bellowis; and the deacon knew it — must 'a' known it!"

"Why, Sam!" we exclaimed, "ain't the deacon a good man?"

"Wal, now, there 's where the shoe pinches! In a gin'al way the deacon *is* a good man — he 's consid'able more than middlin' good: gin'ally he adorns his perfession. On most p'ints I don't hev nothin' agin the deacon; and this 'ere ain't a bit like him. But there 't is! Come to hosses, there 's where the unsanctified natur' comes out. Folks will cheat about hosses when they won't about 'most

nothin' else." And Sam leaned back on his cold forge, now empty of coal, and seemed to deliver himself to a mournful train of general reflection. "Yes, hosses does seem to be sort o' unregenerate critters," he broke out: "there's suthin' about hosses that deceives the very elect. The best o' folks gets tripped up when they come to deal in hosses."

"Why, Sam, is there anything bad in horses?" we interjected timidly.

"'T ain't the hosses, boys," said Sam with solemnity. "Lordy massy! the hosses is all right enough! Hosses is scriptural animals. Elijah went up to heaven in a chari't with hosses: and then all them lots o' hosses in the Ravelations, — black and white and red, and all sorts o' colors. That 'are shows hosses goes to heaven; but it 's more 'n the folks that hev 'em is likely to, ef they don't look out.

"Ministers, now," continued Sam in a soliloquizing vein — "folks allers thinks it 's suthin' sort o' shaky in a minister to hev hosses, — sure to get 'em into trouble. There was old Parson Williams of North Billriky got into a dreffful mess about a hoss. Lordy massy! he warn't to blame, neither; but he got into the dreffulest scrape you ever heard on — come nigh to unsettlin' him."

"O Sam! tell us all about it," we boys shouted, delighted with the prospect of a story.

"Wal, wait now till I get off this critter's shoes, and we 'll take him up to pastur', and then we can kind o' set by the river, and fish. Hepsy wanted a mess o' fish for supper, and I was cal'latin' to git some for her. You boys go and be digging bait, and git yer lines."

And so, as we were sitting tranquilly beside the Charles River, watching our lines, Sam's narrative began: —

"Ye see, boys, Parson Williams — he 's dead now, but when I was a boy he was one of the gret men round here. He writ books. He writ a tract agin the Armenians,

and put 'em down; and he writ a big book on the millennium (I 've got that 'are book now); and he was a smart preacher. Folks said he had invitations to settle in Boston, and there ain't no doubt he might 'a' hed a Boston parish ef he 'd 'a' ben a mind ter take it; but he 'd got a good settlement and a handsome farm in North Billriky, and did n't care to move: thought, I s'pose, that 't was better to be number one in a little place than number two in a big un. Anyway, he carried all before him where he was.

"Parson Williams was a tall, straight, personable man; come of good family — father and grand'ther before him all ministers. He was putty up-and-down, and commandin' in his ways, and things had to go putty much as he said. He was a good deal sot by, Parson Williams was, and his wife was a Derby, — one o' them rich Salem Derbys, — and brought him a lot o' money; and so they lived putty easy and comfortable so fur as this world's goods goes. Well, now, the parson wan't reely what you call worldly minded; but then he was one o' them folks that *knows what 's good* in temporals as well as sperituals, and allers liked to hev the best that there was goin'; and he allers had an eye to a good hoss.

"Now, there was Parson Adams and Parson Scranton, and most of the other ministers: they did n't know and did n't care what hoss they hed; jest jogged round with these 'ere poundin', pot-bellied, sleepy critters that ministers mostly hes, — good enough to crawl round to funerals and ministers' meetin's and associations and sich; but Parson Williams, he allers would hev a hoss as was a hoss. He looked out for *blood;* and when these 'ere Vermont fellers would come down with a drove, the parson, he hed his eyes open, and knew what was what. Could n't none of 'em cheat him on hoss flesh. And so one time when Zach Buel was down with a drove, the doctor, he bought the best hoss

in the lot. Zach said he never see a parson afore that he could n't cheat; but he said the doctor reely knew as much as he did, and got the very one he 'd meant to 'a' kept for himself.

"This 'ere hoss was a peeler, I 'll tell you! They 'd called him Tamerlane, from some heathen feller or other: the boys called him Tam, for short. Tam was a gret character. All the fellers for miles round knew the doctor's Tam, and used to come clear over from the other parishes to see him.

"Wal, this 'ere sot up Cuff's back high, I tell you! Cuff was the doctor's nigger man, and he was nat'lly a dreffal proud critter. The way he would swell and strut and brag about the doctor and his folks and his things! The doctor used to give Cuff his cast-off clothes; and Cuff would prance round in 'em, and seem to think he was a doctor of divinity himself, and had the charge of all natur'.

"Well, Cuff he reely made an idol o' that 'are hoss, — a reg'lar graven image, — and bowed down and worshiped him. He did n't think nothin' was too good for him. He washed and brushed and curried him, and rubbed him down till he shone like a lady's satin dress; and he took pride in ridin' and drivin' him, 'cause it was what the doctor would n't let nobody else do but himself. You see, Tam war n't no lady's hoss. Miss Williams was 'fraid as death of him; and the parson, he hed to git her a sort o' low-sperited critter that she could drive herself. But he liked to drive Tam; and he liked to go round the country on his back, and a fine figure of a man he was on him too. He did n't let nobody else back him, or handle the reins, but Cuff; and Cuff was dreffal set up about it, and he swelled and bragged about that ar hoss all round the country. Nobody could n't put in a word 'bout any other hoss, without Cuff's feathers would be all up, stiff as a

tom-turkey's tail; and that 's how Cuff got the doctor into trouble.

"Ye see, there nat'lly was others that thought they 'd got horses, and did n't want to be crowed over. There was Bill Atkins out to the west parish, and Ike Sanders, that kep' a stable up to Pequot Holler: they was down a-lookin' at the parson's hoss, and a-bettin' on their'n, and a-darin' Cuff to race with 'em.

"Wal, Cuff, he could n't stan' it, and when the doctor's back was turned, he 'd be off on the sly, and they 'd hev their race; and Tam, he beat 'em all. Tam, ye see, boys, was a hoss that could n't and would n't hev a hoss ahead of him — he jest *would n't!* Ef he dropped down dead in his tracks the next minit, he *would* be ahead; and he allers got ahead. And so his name got up, and fellers kep' comin' to try their horses; and Cuff 'd take Tam out to race with fust one and then another till this 'ere got to be a reg'lar thing, and begun to be talked about.

"Folks sort o' wondered if the doctor knew; but Cuff was sly as a weasel, and allers had a story ready for every turn. Cuff was one of them fellers that could talk a bird off a bush, — master hand he was to slick things over!

"There was folks as said they believed the doctor was knowin' to it, and that he felt a sort o' carnal pride sech as a minister ought n't fer to hev, and so shet his eyes to what was a-goin' on. Aunt Sally Nickerson said she was sure on 't. 'T was all talked over down to old Miss Bummiger's funeral, and Aunt Sally, she said the church ought to look into 't. But everybody knew Aunt Sally: she was allers watchin' for folks' haltin's, and settin' on herself up to jedge her neighbors.

"Wal, I never believed nothin' agin Parson Williams: it was all Cuff's contrivances. But the fact was, the fellers all got their blood up, and there was hoss-racin' in all the parishes; and it got so they 'd even race hosses a Sunday.

"Wal, of course they never got the doctor's hoss out a Sunday. Cuff would n't 'a' durst to do that, Lordy massy, no! He was allers there in church, settin' up in the doctor's clothes, rollin' up his eyes, and lookin' as pious as ef he never thought o' racin' hosses. He was an awful solemn-lookin' nigger in church, Cuff was.

"But there was a lot o' them fellers up to Pequot Holler — Bill Atkins, and Ike Sanders, and Tom Peters, and them Hokum boys — used to go out arter meetin' Sunday arternoon, and race hosses. Ye see, it was jest close to the State-line, and, if the s'lectmen was to come down on 'em, they could jest whip over the line, and they could n't take 'em.

"Wal, it got to be a great scandal. The fellers talked about it up to the tavern, and the deacons and the tithingman, they took it up and went to Parson Williams about it; and the parson he told 'em jest to keep still, not let the fellers know that they was bein' watched, and next Sunday he and the tithingman and the constable, they 'd ride over, and catch 'em in the very act.

"So next Sunday arternoon Parson Williams and Deacon Popkins and Ben Bradley (he was constable that year), they got on to their hosses, and rode over to Pequot Holler. The doctor's blood was up, and he meant to come down on 'em strong; for that was his way of doin' in his parish. And they was in a sort o' day-o'-jedgment frame o' mind, and jogged along solemn as a hearse, till, come to rise the hill above the holler, they see three or four fellers with their hosses gittin' ready to race; and the parson says he, 'Let 's come on quiet, and get behind these bushes, and we 'll see what they 're up to, and catch 'em in the act.'

"But the mischief on 't was, that Ike Sanders see 'em comin', and he knowed Tam in a minit, — Ike knowed Tam of old, — and he jest tipped the wink to the rest.

'Wait, boys,' says he: 'let 'em git close up, and then I 'll give the word, and the doctor's hoss will be racin' ahead like thunder.'

"Wal, so the doctor and his folks, they drew up behind the bushes, and stood there innocent as could be, and saw 'em gittin' ready to start. Tam, he begun to snuffle and paw; but the doctor never mistrusted what he was up to till Ike sung out, 'Go it, boys!' and the hosses all started, when, sure as you live, boys! Tam gave one fly, and was over the bushes, and in among 'em, goin' it like chain-lightnin' ahead of 'em all.

"Deacon Popkins and Ben Bradley jest stood and held their breath to see 'em all goin' it so like thunder; and the doctor, he was took so sudden it was all he could do to jest hold on anyway: so away he went, and trees and bushes and fences streaked by him like ribbins. His hat flew off behind him, and his wig arter, and got catched in a barberry-bush; but Lordy massy! he could n't stop to think o' them. He jest leaned down, and caught Tam round the neck, and held on for dear life till they come to the stopping-place.

"Wal, Tam was ahead of them all, sure enough, and was snorting and snuffling as if he 'd got the very old boy in him, and was up to racing some more on the spot.

"That 'ere Ike Sanders was the impudentest feller that ever you see, and he roared and rawhawed at the doctor. 'Good for you, parson!' says he. 'You beat us all holler,' says he. 'Takes a parson for that, don't it, boys?' he said. And then he and Ike and Tom, and the two Hokum boys, they jest roared, and danced round like wild critters. Wal, now, only think on 't, boys, what a situation that 'are was for a minister, — a man that had come out with the best of motives to put a stop to sabbath-breakin'! There he was all rumpled up and dusty, and his wig hangin' in the bushes, and these 'ere ungodly fellers gettin' the laugh

on him, and all acause o' that 'are hoss. There 's times, boys, when ministers must be tempted to swear if there ain't preventin' grace, and this was one o' them times to Parson Williams. They say he got red in the face, and looked as if he should bust, but he did n't say nothin' : he scorned to answer. The sons o' Zeruiah was too hard for him, and he let 'em hev their say. But when they 'd got through, and Ben had brought him his hat and wig, and brushed and settled him again, the parson, he says, ' Well, boys, ye 've had your say and your laugh ; but I warn you now I won't have this thing going on here any more,' says he : ' so mind yourselves.'

" Wal, the boys see that the doctor's blood was up, and they rode off pretty quiet ; and I believe they never raced no more in that spot.

" But there ain't no tellin' the talk this 'ere thing made. Folks will talk, you know ; and there warn't a house in all Billricky, nor in the south parish nor centre, where it warn't had over and discussed. There was the deacon, and Ben Bradley was there, to witness and show jest how the thing was, and that the doctor was jest in the way of his duty ; but folks said it made a great scandal ; that a minister had n't no business to hev that kind o' hoss, and that he 'd give the enemy occasion to speak reproachfully. It reely did seem as if Tam's sins was imputed to the doctor ; and folks said he ought to sell Tam right away, and get a sober minister's hoss.

" But others said it was Cuff that had got Tam into bad ways, and they do say that Cuff had to catch it pretty lively when the doctor come to settle with him. Cuff thought his time had come, sure enough and was so scairt that he turned blacker 'n ever : he got enough to cure him o' hoss-racin' for one while. But Cuff got over it arter a while, and so did the doctor. Lordy massy ! there ain't nothin' lasts forever ! Wait long enough, and 'most everything

blows over. So it turned out about the doctor. There was a rumpus and a fuss, and folks talked and talked, and advised; everybody had their say: but the doctor kep' right straight on, and kep' his hoss all the same.

"The ministers, they took it up in the association; but, come to tell the story, it sot 'em all a-laughin', so they could n't be very hard on the doctor.

"The doctor felt sort o' streaked at fust when they told the story on him; he did n't jest like it: but he got used to it, and finally, when he was twitted on 't, he 'd sort o' smile, and say, 'Anyway, Tam beat 'em; that 's one comfort.'"

XIV

OLDTOWN FIRESIDE TALKS OF THE REVOLUTION

THE sacred work of preparation for Thanksgiving was at hand. Our kitchen was fragrant with the smell of cinnamon, cloves, and allspice, which we boys were daily set to pound in the great lignum-vitæ mortar. Daily the great oven flamed without cessation; and the splitting of oven-wood kept us youngsters so busy, that we scarce had a moment to play: yet we did it with a cheerful mind, inspired by the general aroma of coming festivity abroad in the house.

Behold us this evening around the kitchen-fire, which crackled and roared up the wide chimney, brightening with its fluttering radiance the farthest corner of the ample room. A tub of rosy-cheeked apples, another of golden quinces, and a bushel-basket filled with ruby cranberries, stood in the midst of the circle. All hands were busy. Grandmother in one corner was superintending us boys as we peeled and quartered the fruit, — an operation in which grandfather took a helping hand; Aunt Lois was busily looking over and sorting cranberries, when a knock at the door announced a visitor.

"Well, now, I s'pose that 's Sam Lawson, of course," snapped Aunt Lois.

Aunt Lois generally spoke with a snap; but about Thanksgiving time it had a cheery ring, like the snapping of our brisk kitchen-fire.

"Good evenin', Miss Badger and Miss Lois," said Sam.

"I see yer winders so bright, I could n't help wantin' to come in and help ye pare apples, or suthin'."

We boys made haste to give Sam the warmest welcome, and warmest place in the chimney-corner, and to accommodate him with a tin pan full of quinces, and a knife, when he was soon settled among us.

"Wal, this 'ere does look cheerful, — looks like Thanksgivin'," he began. "Wal, Lordy massy! we 've got a great deal to be thankful for in this 'ere land o' privileges; hain't we, deacon? I was a-comin' 'round by Miss Lothrop's to-day; and her Dina, she told me the Doctor was gettin' a great sermon out on the hundred and twenty-fourth Psalm: 'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up.' He 's a-goin' to show all our deliverances in the war. I expect it 'll be a whale of a sermon, 'cause, when our minister sets out to do a thing, he mos' generally does it up to the handle. Tell ye what, boys, you must listen with all your ears: you 'll never know what times them was if you don't — you don't know what liberty cost us all. There 's your gran'ther, now, he could tell ye: he 'members when he went off to Lexington with his gun on his shoulders."

"Why, grandfather! did you go?" we both exclaimed with wide eyes.

"Well, boys," said my grandfather, "'t ain't worth talkin' about what I did. I was in my mill that day minding my business, when brother Con, he burst in and says he, 'Look here, Bill, the regulars are goin' up to Concord to destroy our stores, and we must all go. Come, get your gun.' Well, I said I was a miller, and millers were exempt from duty; but Con would n't let me alone. 'Get down your gun,' says he. 'Suppose we 're going to let them British fellers walk over us?' says he. Well, Con always had his way of me; and I got my gun, and we started out through the

woods over to Concord. We lived at Weston then, ye see. Well, when we got on the brow of the hill, we looked over, and, sure enough, there on burying-ground hill was the British regulars. The hill was all alive with 'em, marching here and there in their scarlet coats like so many bees out of a hive.

"'Con,' says I, 'jest look there. What are you going to do?'

"'Shoot some of 'em, I know,' says Con.

"And so we ran along, hiding behind trees and bushes and stone walls, till we got near enough to get a shot at 'em. You see, they broke up into companies, and went here and there about town, looking for the stores; and then, as we got a chance here and there, we marked our men, and popped, and then we 'd run, and take aim somewhere else."

"Wal, now, that 'are wa'n't the hull on 't," said Sam. "Why, there was hundreds of fellers doin' just the same all round: it was jest pop-pop-pop! from every barn, and every bush, and clump o' trees, all along the way. Men was picked off all the time; and they could n't see who did it, and it made 'em mad as fury. Why, I 'member Mis' Tom Bigelow, she that was Sary Jones, told me how they sot her mother's house afire and burnt it down, 'cause their nigger man Cæsar popped at 'em out o' the buttery window. They did n't tell him to; but Cæsar, he was full of fight, like all the rest on 'em. Lordy massy! the niggers went for suthin' in them times! Their blood was up as quick as anybody's. Why, there was old Pompey Lovejoy lived over by Pomp's pond in Andover, he hitched up his wagon, and driv over with two barrels o' cider and some tin dippers, and was round all day givin' drinks o' cider to our men when they got het and thirsty and tired. It was a pretty warm day for April, that was. Pomp has told me the story many a time. 'T was all the cider he had; but cider goes

for suthin', as well as gunpowder in its place, and Pomp's cider come jest right that day."

"But grandfather," said I, "what happened to you over there?"

"Well, you see," said grandfather placidly, "I was n't killed; but I come pretty nigh it. You see, they sent into Boston for reënforcements; and by the time we got to Lexington, Earl Percy was marching out with fresh troops and cannon. Con and I were standing on the meetin'-house steps, when there come a terrible bang, and something struck right over our heads, and went into the meetin'-house. 'Why, Bill!' says Con, 'what 's that?'—'They 've got cannon: that 's what that is,' says I. 'Let 's run 'round the other side.' So we did; but just as we got 'round there, there come another bang, and a ball crashed right through the meetin'-house, and come out of the pulpit window. Well, we saw there was no staying there: so we run then, and got into a little clump of trees behind a stone wall; and there we saw 'em go by, — Earl Percy on his horse, and all his troops, ever so grand. He went on up to Concord. Fact is, if it had n't been for him and his men, those regulars would all have been cut off: they would n't one of 'em have got back, for the whole country was up and fighting. The militia came pouring in from Weston and Acton and Billriky, — all the towns 'round. Then their Colonel Smith was wounded and a good many others, and lots of 'em killed and our minute-men coming on 'em before and behind, and all around. But ye see, we could n't stand regular troops and cannon; and so, when they come on, we had to give back. Earl Percy came up, and formed a hollow square, and they marched into it, and so gave 'em time to rest."

"Wal, there was need enough on 't," said Sam.

"The regulars had been hectored and picked, and driv 'round so from piller to post, that they was dog tired. Jimmy Irwin, he was a little chap then; but he telled

me how he see the men jest throw 'emselves down on the ground, their tongues out o' their mouths like hunting-dogs. You see, they had about two hundred wounded, and twenty-eight or nine was taken prisoners, and sixty-four killed outright: so Lord Percy had his hands full o' takin care o' the mess they 'd got up."

"Yes," said my grandfather, "there were dead men lying all around the road as we came back. There, boys!" he said, pointing to a gun and powder-horn over the chimney, "we picked up these when we were coming home. We found them on a poor fellow who lay there dead in the road: there 's some blood of his on it to this day. We could n't help feeling it was most too bad too."

"Poor fellow! he wa'n't to blame," said my grandmother. "Soldiers have to go as they 're bid. War 's an awful thing."

"Then they should n't have begun it," interposed Aunt Lois. "'They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'"

"Well, grandpapa," said I, "what were the stores they went up to get?"

"They were stores laid up to enable us to go to war, and they were 'round in different places. There were two twenty-four-pounders that they spiked, and they threw about five hundred pounds of ball into the river or wells, and broke up sixty barrels of flour, and scattered it about."

"Wal," said Sam triumphantly, "there was one lot they did n't get. Cap'n Tim Wheeler had about the biggest lot o' wheat, and rye-flour, and corn-meal stored up in his barn, with some barrels of his own. So when this 'ere fine jay-bird of an officer came to him all so grand, and told him to open his barn and let him look in, the cap'n, he took his key, and walked right out, and opened the barn-door; and the officer was tickled to pieces. He thought he 'd got such a haul!

"'If you please, sir,' says the cap'n, 'I 'm a miller, and get my living by grinding grain. I 'm a poor man. You can see my mill out there. I grind up a lot o' grain in the winter, and get it ready to sell in the spring. Some 's wheat, and some 's rye, and some 's corn-meal; and this wheat is mine, and this rye is mine, and this corn-meal is mine;' and, when he spoke, he put his hand on his own barrels.

"'Oh! if this is your private property,' says the officer, 'we sha'n't touch that: we don't meddle with private property.' And so he turned on his heel, and the cap'n, he locked up his barn."

"Was that telling the truth?" said I.

"Wal, you see it was true what he said," said Sam. "Them bar'ls he laid his hands on was his'n."

"But Aunt Lois told me yesterday it was as bad to act a lie as to speak one," said I.

"Well, so I did," said Aunt Lois. "The truth is the truth, and I 'll stick to it."

"But, Aunt Lois, would you have told him, and let him break up all those barrels?"

"No, I should n't," said Aunt Lois. "I should have done just as Cap'n Tim did; but I should have done *wrong*. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, even if I can't come up to it always."

"What would you have done, grandfather?" said I.

My grandfather's mild face slowly irradiated, as when moonbeams pass over a rock.

"Well, boys," he said, "I don't think I should have let him break up those barrels. If it was wrong to do as Cap'n Wheeler did, I think most likely I should 'a' done it. I don't suppose I 'm any better than he was."

"Well, at any rate," said Aunt Lois, "what folks do in war time is no rule for ordinary times: everything is upset then. There ain't any of the things they do in war time

that are according to Gospel teaching; but, if you boys were to do just as Cap'n Wheeler did, I should say you lied by speaking the truth."

"Well, well," said my grandmother, "those were dreadful times. Thank the Lord that they are past and gone, and we don't have such awful cases of conscience as we did then. I never could quite see how we did right to resist the king at all."

"Why, the Bible says, 'Resist the devil,'" said Aunt Lois.

A general laugh followed this sally.

"I always heard," said my grandfather, by way of changing the subject, "that they meant to have taken Mr. Adams and Mr. Hancock and hung 'em."

"Wal, to be sure they did," said Sam Lawson. "I know all about that 'are. Sapphira Clark, up to Lexington, she told me all about that 'are, one day when I was to her house puttin' down her best parlor carpet. Sapphira wa'n't but ten or eleven years old when the war broke out; but she remembered all about it. Ye see, Mr. Hancock and Mr. Adams was a-staying hid up at their house. Her father, Mr. Jonas Clark, was minister of Lexington; and he kep' 'em quite private, and did n't let nobody know they was there. Wal, Sapphira said they was all a-settin' at supper, when her father, he heard a great rapping at the front-door; and her father got up and went and opened it; and she looked after him into the entry, and could see a man in a scarlet uniform standing at the door, and she heard him ask, 'Are Sam Adams and John Hancock here?' And her father answered, 'Oh, hush! Don't mention those names here.' — 'Then,' says the man, 'I come to tell you the British troops will be along by sunrise; and, if they are in your house, they 'd better escape right away.'"

"That must have been Colonel Paul Revere," said Aunt Lois. "He went all through the country, from Boston to Concord, rousing up people, and telling 'em to be ready."

"Well, what did Mr. Adams and Hancock do?"

"Wal, they got ready right away, and slipped quietly out the back-door, and made their way over to Burlington, and staid in the minister's house over there out of the way of the battle."

"What would the British have done with 'em if they had caught them?" said I.

"Hung 'em — high as Haman," said my Aunt Lois sententiously. "That 's what they 'd have done. That 's what they 'd 'a' done to them, and to General Washington, and lots more, if they 'd had their way."

"Oh, yes!" said grandfather, "they were mighty high-stepping at first. They thought they had only to come over and show themselves, and they could walk through the land, and hang and burn and slay just whom they 'd a mind to."

"Wal, they found 't was like jumping into a hornets' nest," said Sam Lawson. "They found that out at Lexington and Bunker Hill."

"Brother Con was in those trenches at Bunker Hill," said grandfather. "There they dug away at the breastworks, with the bom'-shells firing 'round 'em. They did n't mind them more than if they 'd been hickory-nuts. They kep' fellows ready to pour water on 'em as they fell."

"Well, I never want to feel again as I did that day," said grandmother. "I was in Boston, visiting cousin Jemima Russell, and we were all out on the roof of the house. The roofs everywhere were all alive with people looking through spy-glasses; and we could hear the firing, but could n't tell how the day was going. And then they set Charlestown on fire; and the blaze and smoke and flame rose up, and there was such a snapping and crackling, and we could hear roofs and timbers falling, and see people running this way and that with their children — women scared half to death a-flying; and we knew all the time there was

cousin Jane Wilkinson in that town sick in bed, with a baby only a few days old. It 's a wonder how Jane ever lived through it; but they did get her through alive, and her baby too. That burning Charlestown settled the point with a good many. They determined then to fight it through: it was so mean and cruel and needless."

"Yes," said my grandfather, "that day settled the question that we would be free and independent, or die; and though our men had to retreat, yet it was as good as a defeat to the British. They lost ten hundred and fifty-four in killed and wounded, and we only four hundred and fifty-three; and our men learned that they could fight as well as the British. Congress went right to work to raise an army, and appointed General Washington commander. Your gran'-ther Stowe, boys, was orderly of the day when General Washington took the command at Cambridge."

"Wal," said Sam, "I was in Cambridge that day and saw it all. Ye see, the army was drawn up under the big elm there; and Ike Newel and I, we clim up into a tree, and got a place where we could look down and see. I wa'n't but ten year old then; but, if ever a mortal man looked like the angel of the Lord, the gineral looked like it that day."

"Some said that there was trouble about having General Ward give up the command to a Southern man," said my grandfather. "General Ward was a brave man and very popular; but everybody was satisfied when they came to know General Washington."

"There could n't no minister have seemed more godly than he did that day," said Sam. "He read out of the hymn-book the hundred and first Psalm."

"What is that psalm?" said I.

"Laws, boys! I know it by heart," said Sam, "I was so impressed hearin' on him read it. I can say it to you: —

"'Mercy and judgment are my song,
And since they both to thee belong,
My gracious God, my righteous King,
To thee my songs and vows I bring.
If I am raised to bear the sword,
I'll take my counsels from thy word.
Thy justice and thy heavenly grace
Shall be the pattern of my ways.
I'll search the land, and raise the just
To posts of honor, wealth, and trust:
The men who work thy righteous will
Shall be my friends and favorites still.
The impious crew, the factious band,
Shall hold their peace, or quit the land;
And all who break the public rest,
Where I have power, shall be suppressed.'"

"And he did it too," remarked Aunt Lois.

"He trusted in the Lord, and the Lord brought him to honor," said my grandmother. "When he took the army, everything was agin' us: it did n't seem possible we should succeed."

"Wal, he was awful put to it sometimes," said Sam Lawson. "I 'member Uncle David Morse was a-tellin' me 'bout that 'are time down in New York when the Massachusetts and Connecticut boys all broke and run."

"Massachusetts boys run? How came that Sam?" said I.

"Wal, you see, sometimes fellows will get a-runnin'; and it jest goes from one to another like fire, and ye can't stop it. It was after the battle of Long Island, when our men had been fighting day after day, and had to retreat. A good many were wounded, and a good many of 'em were sick and half-sick; and they 'd got sort o' tired and discouraged.

"Well, Lord Howe and the British came to make a landing at Kipp's Bay, round by New York; and the troops set to guard the landing began to run, and the Massachusetts and Connecticut men were sent to help 'em. Uncle David says that the fellows that run spread the panic

among 'em; and they looked ahead, and saw an ox-drag on top of a hill they was to pass, and they thought 't was a cannon pintin' right at 'em; and the boys they jest broke and run, — cut right across the road, and cleared over the fence, and streaked it off cross-lots and up hill like a flock o' sheep. Uncle David, he run too; but he 'd been sick o' dysentary, and was so weak he could n't climb the fence: so he stopped and looked back, and saw Gineral Washington cantering up behind 'em, shouting, and waving his sword, looking like a flamin' fire. Oh, he was thunderin' mad, the gineral was! And when he see the fellows skittering off cross-lots, he jest slammed his hat down on the ground, and give up. 'Great heavens!' says he, 'are these the men I 've got to fight this battle with?'

"Wal, Uncle David, he picked up the gineral's hat, and come up and made his bow, and said, 'Gineral, here 's your hat.'

"'Thank you, sir!' said the gineral. 'I 'm glad to see one brave fellow that can stand his ground. *You* did n't run.'

"Uncle David said he felt pretty cheap, 'cause he know'd in his own heart that he would 'a' run, only he was too weak to git over the fence; but he did n't tell the gineral that, I bet! He put the compliment in his pocket, and said nothing; for now the gineral's aides came riding up full drive, and told him they must be off out of the field in a minute, or the British would have 'em, and so one on 'em took Uncle David up behind him, and away they cantered. It was a pretty close shave too: the British was only a few rods behind 'em."

"Oh, dear, if they had caught him!" said I. "Only think!"

"Well, they would have hung him; but we should have had another in his place," said Aunt Lois. "The war would n't 'a' stopped."

"Well, 't was to be as 't was," said my grandmother. "The Lord had respect to the prayers of our fathers, and he 'd decreed that America should be free."

"Yes," said Sam: "Parson Lothrop said in one of his sermons, that men always was safe when they was goin' in the line o' God's decrees: I guess that 'are was about it. But, massy! is that 'are the nine o'clock bell? I must make haste home, or I dun' know what Hetty 'll say to me."

XV

A STUDENT'S SEA STORY

Among the pleasantest of my recollections of old Bowdoin is the salt-air flavor of its sea experiences. The site of Brunswick is a sandy plain, on which the college buildings seem to have been dropped for the good old Yankee economic reason of using land for public buildings that could not be used for anything else. The soil was a fathomless depth of dry, sharp, barren sand, out of whose bosom nothing but pitch-pines and blueberry-bushes emerged, or ever could emerge without superhuman efforts of cultivation. But these sandy plains, these pine forests, were neighbors to the great, lively, musical blue ocean, whose life-giving presence made itself seen, heard, and felt every hour of the day and night. The beautiful peculiarity of the Maine coast, where the sea interpenetrates the land in picturesque fiords and lakes, brought a constant romantic element into the landscape. White-winged ships from India or China came gliding into the lonely solitude of forest recesses, bringing news from strange lands, and tidings of wild adventure, into secluded farmhouses, that, for the most part, seemed to be dreaming in woodland solitude. In the early days of my college life, the shipping interest of Maine gave it an outlook into all the countries of the earth. Ships and ship-building and ship-launching were the drift of the popular thought; and the very minds of the people by this commerce had apparently suffered

> "a sea change
> Into something rich and strange."

There was a quaintness, shrewdness, and vivacity about these men, half skipper, half farmer, that was piquant and enlivening.

It was in the auspicious period of approaching Thanksgiving that my chum and I resolved to antedate for a few days our vacation, and take passage on the little sloop Brilliant, that lay courtesying and teetering on the bright waters of Maquoit Bay, loading up to make her Thanksgiving trip to Boston.

It was a bright Indian-summer afternoon that saw us all on board the little craft. She was laden deep with dainties and rarities for the festal appetites of Boston nabobs, — loads of those mealy potatoes for which the fields of Maine were justly famed, barrels of ruby cranberries, boxes of solid golden butter (ventures of a thrifty housemother emulous to gather kindred gold in the Boston market). Then there were dressed chickens, turkeys, and geese, all going the same way, on the same errand; and there were sides and saddles of that choice mutton for which the sea islands of Maine were as famous as the South Downs of England.

Everything in such a stowage was suggestive of good cheer. The little craft itself had a sociable, friendly, domestic air. The captain and mate were cousins: the men were all neighbors, sons of families who had grown up together. There was a kindly home flavor in the very stowage of the cargo. Here were Melissa's cranberries, and by many a joke and wink we were apprised that the mate had a tender interest in that venture. There was Widder Toothacre's butter, concerning which there were various comments and speculations, but which was handled and cared for with the consideration the Maine sailor-boy always gives to "the widder." There was a private keg of very choice eggs, over which the name of Lucindy Ann was breathed by a bright-eyed, lively young-

ster, who had promised to bring her back the change, and as to the precise particulars of this change many a witticism was expended.

Our mode of living on the Brilliant was of the simplest and most primitive kind. On each side the staircase that led down to the cabin, hooped strongly to the partition, was a barrel, which on the one side contained salt beef, and on the other salt pork. A piece out of each barrel delivered regularly to the cook, formed the foundation of our daily meals; and sea-biscuit and potatoes, with the sauce of salt-water appetites, made this a feast for a king. I make no mention here of gingerbread and doughnuts, and such like ornamental accessories, which were not wanting, nor of nuts and sweet cider, which were to be had for the asking. At meal-times a swing-shelf, which at other seasons hung flat against the wall, was propped up, and our meals were eaten thereon in joyous satisfaction.

A joyous, rollicking set we were, and the whole expedition was a frolic of the first water. One of the drollest features of these impromptu voyages often was the woe-begone aspect of some unsuspecting land-lubber, who had been beguiled into thinking that he would like a trip to Boston by seeing the pretty Brilliant courtesying in the smooth waters of Maquoit, and so had embarked, in innocent ignorance of the physiological results of such enterprises.

I remember the first morning out. As we were driving ahead, under a stiff breeze, I came on deck, and found the respectable Deacon Muggins, who in his Sunday coat had serenely embarked the day before, now desolately clinging to the railing, very white about the gills, and contemplating the sea with a most suggestive expression of disgust and horror.

"Why, deacon, good-morning! How are you? Splendid morning!" said I maliciously.

He drew a deep breath, surveyed me with a mixture of indignation and despair, and then gave vent to his feelings: "Tell ye what: there was one darned old fool up to Brunswick yesterday! but he ain't there now: he 's here." The deacon, in the weekly prayer-meeting at Brunswick, used to talk of the necessity of being "emptied of self:" he seemed to be in the way of it in the most literal manner at the present moment. In a few minutes he was extended on the deck, the most utterly limp and dejected of deacons, and vowing with energy, if he ever got out o' this 'ere, you would n't catch him again. Of course, my chum and I were not seasick. We were prosperous young sophomores in Bowdoin College, and would have scorned to acknowledge such a weakness. In fact we were in the happy state of self-opinion where we surveyed everything in creation, as birds do, from above, and were disposed to patronize everybody we met, with a pleasing conviction that there was nothing worth knowing, but what we were likely to know, or worth doing, but what we could do.

Captain Stanwood liked us, and we liked him: we patronized him, and he was quietly amused at our patronage, and returned it in kind. He was a good specimen of the sea-captain in those early days in Maine: a man in middle life, tall, thin, wiry, and active, full of resource and shrewd mother-wit; a man very confident in his opinions, because his knowledge was all got at first-hand, — the result of a careful use of his own five senses. From his childhood he had followed the seas, and, as he grew older, made voyages to Archangel, to Messina, to the West Indies, and finally round the Horn; and, having carried a very sharp and careful pair of eyes, he had acquired not only a snug competency of worldly goods, but a large stock of facts and inductions, which stood him instead of an education. He was master of a thriving farm at Harpswell, and, being tethered somewhat by love of wife and children, was mostly

stationary there, yet solaced himself by running a little schooner to Boston, and driving a thriving bit of trade by the means. With that reverence for learning which never deserts the New Englander, he liked us the better for being collegians, and amiably conceded that there were things quite worth knowing taught "up to Brunswick there," though he delighted now and then to show his superiority in talking about what he knew better than we.

Jim Larned, the mate, was a lusty youngster, a sister's son whom he had taken in training in the way he should go. Jim had already made a voyage to Liverpool and the East Indies, and felt himself also quite an authority in his own way.

The evenings were raw and cool; and we generally gathered round the cabin stove, cracking walnuts, smoking, and telling stories, and having a jolly time generally. It is but due to those old days to say that a most respectable Puritan flavor penetrated even the recesses of those coasters, — a sort of gentle Bible and psalm-book aroma, so that there was not a word or a joke among the men to annoy the susceptibilities even of a deacon. Our deacon, somewhat consoled and amended, lay serene in his berth, rather enjoying the yarns that we were spinning. The web, of course, was many-colored, — of quaint and strange and wonderful; and, as the night wore on, it was dyed in certain weird tints of the supernatural.

"Well," said Jim Larned, "folks may say what they 're a mind to: there are things that there 's no sort o' way o' 'countin' for, — things you 've jist got to say, 'Well, here 's suthin' to work that I don't know nothin' about;' and, come to question any man up sharp, you 'll find he 's seen *one* thing o' that sort himself; and this 'ere I'm going to tell 's my story: —

"Four years ago I went down to Aunt Jerushy's at Fair Haven. Her husband 's in the oysterin' business, and I

used to go out with him considerable. Well, there was Bill Jones there, — a real bright fellow, one of your open-handed, lively fellows, — and he took a fancy to me, and I to him, and he and I struck up a friendship. He run an oyster-smack to New York, and did a considerable good business for a young man. Well, Bill had a fellow on his smack that I never liked the looks of. He was from the Malays, or some foreign critter, or other; spoke broken English; had eyes set kind o'edgeways 'n his head: homely as sin he was, and I always mistrusted him. 'Bill,' I used to say, 'you look out for that fellow: don't you trust him. If I was you, I 'd ship him off short metre.' But Bill, he only laughed. 'Why,' says he, 'I can get double work for the same pay out o' that fellow; and what do I care if he ain't handsome?' I remember how chipper an' cheery Bill looked when he was sayin' that, just as he was going down to New York with his load o' oysters. Well, the next night I was sound asleep in Aunt Jerusha's front-chamber that opens towards the Sound, and I was waked right clear out o' sleep by Bill's voice screaming to me. I got up and run to the window, and looked out, and I heard it again, plain as anything: 'Jim, Jim! Help, help!' It was n't a common cry, neither: it was screeched out, as if somebody was murdering him. I tell you, it rung through my head for weeks afterwards."

"Well, what came of it?" said my chum, as the narrator made a pause, and we all looked at him in silence.

"Well, as nigh as we can make it out, that very night poor Bill *was* murdered by that very Malay feller: leastways, his body was found in his boat. He 'd been stabbed, and all his money and watch and things taken, and this Malay was gone nobody knew where. That 's all that was ever known about it."

"But surely," said my chum, who was of a very literal and rationalistic turn of mind, "it could n't have been his

voice you heard: he must have been down to the other end of the Sound, close by New York, by that time."

"Well," said the mate, "all I know is, that I was waked out of sleep by Bill's voice calling my name, screaming in a real agony. It went through me like lightning; and then I find he was murdered that night. Now, I don't know anything about it. I know I heard him calling me; I know he was murdered: but how it was, or what it was, or why it was, I don't know."

"These 'ere college boys can tell ye," said the captain. "Of course, they've got into sophomore year, and there ain't nothing in heaven or earth that they don't know."

"No," said I, "I say with Hamlet, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

"Well," said my chum, with the air of a philosopher, "what shakes my faith in all supernatural stories is, that I can't see any use or purpose in them."

"Wal, if there could n't nothin' happen nor be except what *you* could see a use in, there would n't *much* happen nor be," quoth the captain.

A laugh went round at the expense of my friend.

"Wal, now, I'll tell ye what, boys," piped the thin voice of the deacon, "folks must n't be too presumptuous: there is providences permitted that we don't see no use in; but they do happen, — yes, they do. Now, what Jim Larned 's been a-tellin' is a good deal like what happened to me once, when I was up to Umbagog, in the lumberin' business."

"Halloo!" called out Jim, "here 's the deacon's story! I told you every man had one. — Give it to us, deacon! Speak out, and don't be bashful!"

"Wal, really, it ain't what I like to talk about," said the deacon, in a quavering, uncertain voice; "but I don't know but I may as well, though.

"It was that winter I was up to Umbagog. I was clerk, and kep' the 'counts and books, and all that; and Tom Huly, — he was surveyor and marker, — he was there with me, and we chummed together. And there was Jack Cutter; he was jest out o' college: he was there practizing surveyin' with him. We three had a kind o' pine-board sort o' shanty, built out on a plain near by the camp: it had a fire-place, and two windows, and our bunks, and each of us had our tables and books and things.

"Well, Huly, he started with a party of three or four to go up through the woods to look out a new tract. It was two or three days' journey through the woods; and jest about that time the Indians up there was getting sort o' uneasy, and we all thought mabbe 't was sort o' risky: howsomdever, Tom had gone off in high spirits, and told us to be sure and take care of his books and papers. Tom had a lot of books, and thought everything of 'em, and was sort o' particular and nice about his papers. His table sot up one side, by the winder, where he could see to read and write. Well, he 'd been gone four days, when one night — it was a bright moonlight night — Jack and I were sitting by the fire, reading, and between nine and ten o'clock there came a strong, regular knock on the window over by Tom's table. We were sitting with our backs to the window. 'Halloo!' says Jack, 'who 's that?' We both jumped up, and went to the window and looked out, and see there warn't nobody there.

"'This is curus,' said I.

"'Some of the boys trying to trick us,' says he. 'Let 's keep watch: perhaps they 'll do it again,' says he.

"We sot down by the fire, and 'fore long it came again.

"Then Jack and I both cut out the door, and run round the house, — he one way, and I the other. It was light as day, and nothin' for anybody to hide behind, and there warn't a critter in sight. Well, we come in and sot down,

and looked at each other kind o' puzzled, when it come agin, harder'n ever; and Jack looked to the window, and got as white as a sheet.

"'For the Lord's sake, do look!' says he. And you may believe me or not; but I tell you it 's a solemn fact: Tom 's books was movin', — jest as if somebody was pickin' 'em up, and putting 'em down again, jest as I 've seen him do a hundred times.

"'Jack,' says I, 'something 's happened to Tom.'

"Wal, there had. That very night Tom was murdered by the Indians. We put down the date, and a week arter the news came."

"Come now, captain," said I, breaking the pause that followed the deacon's story, "give us your story. You 've been all over the world, in all times and all weathers, and you ain't a man to be taken in. Did you ever see anything of this sort?"

"Well, now, boys, since you put it straight at me, I don't care if I say that I have, — on these 'ere very waters we 're a-sailin' over now, on board this very schooner, in this very cabin."

This was bringing matters close home. We felt an agreeable shiver, and looked over our shoulders: the deacon, in his berth, raised up on his elbow, and ejaculated, "Dew tell! ye don't say so!"

"Tell us about it, captain," we both insisted. "We 'll take your word for most anything."

"Well, it happened about five years ago. It 's goin' on now eight years ago that my father died. He sailed out of Gloucester: had his house there; and, after he died, mother, she jest kep' on in the old place. I went down at first to see her fixed up about right, and after that I went now and then, and now and then I sent money. Well, it was about Thanksgiving time, as it is now, and I 'd ben down to Boston, and was coming back pretty well loaded

with the things I'd been buying in Boston for Thanksgiving at home, — raisins and sugar, and all sorts of West Ingy goods, for the folks in Harpswell. Well, I meant to have gone down to Gloucester to see mother; but I had so many ways to run, and so much to do, I was afraid I would n't be back on time; and so I did n't see her.

"Well, we was driving back with a good stiff breeze, and we 'd got past Cape Ann, and I 'd gone down and turned in, and was fast asleep in my berth. It was past midnight: every one on the schooner asleep, except the mate, who was up on the watch. I was sleepin' as sound as ever I slept in my life, — not a dream, nor a feelin', no more 'n if I had been dead, — when suddenly I waked square up. My eyes flew open like a spring, with my mind clear and wide awake, and, sure as I ever see anything, I see my father standing right in the middle of the cabin, looking right at me. I rose right up in my berth, and says I, —

"'Father, is that you?'

"'Yes,' says he, 'it is me.'

"'Father,' says I, 'what do you come for?'

"'Sam,' says he, 'do you go right back to Gloucester, and take your mother home with you, and keep her there as long as she lives.'

"And says I, 'Father, I will.' And as I said this he faded out and was gone. I got right up, and run up on deck, and called out ''Bout ship!' Mr. More — he was my mate then — stared at me as if he did n't believe his ears. ''Bout ship!' says I. 'I 'm going to Gloucester.'

"Well, he put the ship about, and then came to me, and says, 'What the devil does this mean? We 're way past Cape Ann. It 's forty miles right back to Gloucester.'

"'Can't help it,' I said. 'To Gloucester I must go as quick as wind and water will carry me. I 've thought of matters there that I *must* attend to, no matter what happens.'

"Well, Ben Moore and I were good friends always; but I tell you all that day he watched me, in a curious kind of way, to see if I were n't took with the fever, or suthin'; and the men, they whispered and talked among themselves. You see, they all had their own reasons for wanting to be back to Thanksgiving, and it was hard on 'em.

"Well, it was just about sun-up we got into Gloucester, and I went ashore. And there was mother, looking pretty poorly, jest making her fire, and getting on her kettle. When she saw me, she held up her hands, and burst out crying, —

"'Why, Sam, the Lord must 'a' sent you! I 've ben sick and all alone, having a drefful hard time, and I 've felt as if I could n't hold out much longer.'

"'Well,' says I, 'mother, pack up your things, and come right aboard the sloop; for I 've come to take you home, and take care of you: so put up your things.'

"Well, I took hold and helped her, and we put things together lively, and packed up her trunks, and tied up the bed and pillows and bedclothes, and took her rocking-chair and bureau and tables and chairs down to the sloop. And when I came down, bringing her and all her things, Ben Moore seemed to see what I was after; but how or why the idea came into my head I never told him. There 's things that a man feels shy of tellin', and I did n't want to talk bout it.

"Well, when we was all aboard, the wind sprung up fair and steady, and we went on at a right spanking pace; and the fellows said the Harpswell girls had got hold of our rope, and was pulling us with all their might; and we came in all right the very day before Thanksgiving. And my wife was as glad to see mother as if she 'd expected her, and fixed up the front chamber for her, with a stove in 't, and plenty of kindlings. And the children was all so glad to see grandma, and we had the best kind of a Thanksgiving!"

"Well," said I, "nobody could say there was n't any use in that spirit's coming (if spirit it was); it had a most practical purpose."

"Well," said the captain, "I 've been all round the world, in all sorts of countries, seen all sorts of queer, strange things, and seen so many things that I never could have believed if I had n't seen 'em, that I never say I won't believe this or that. If I see a thing right straight under my eyes, I don't say it could n't 'a' ben there 'cause college-folks say there ain't no such things."

"How do you know it was n't all a dream?" said my chum.

"How do I know? 'Cause I was broad awake, and I gen'lly know when I 'm awake and when I 'm asleep. I think Mr. Moore found me pretty wide awake."

It was now time to turn in, and we slept soundly while the Brilliant ploughed her way. By daybreak the dome of the State House was in sight.

"I 've settled the captain's story," said my chum to me. "It can all be accounted for on the theory of cerebral hallucination."

"All right," said I; "but it answered the purpose beautifully for the old mother."

Fireside Edition

NOVELS AND
STORIES BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

VII

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